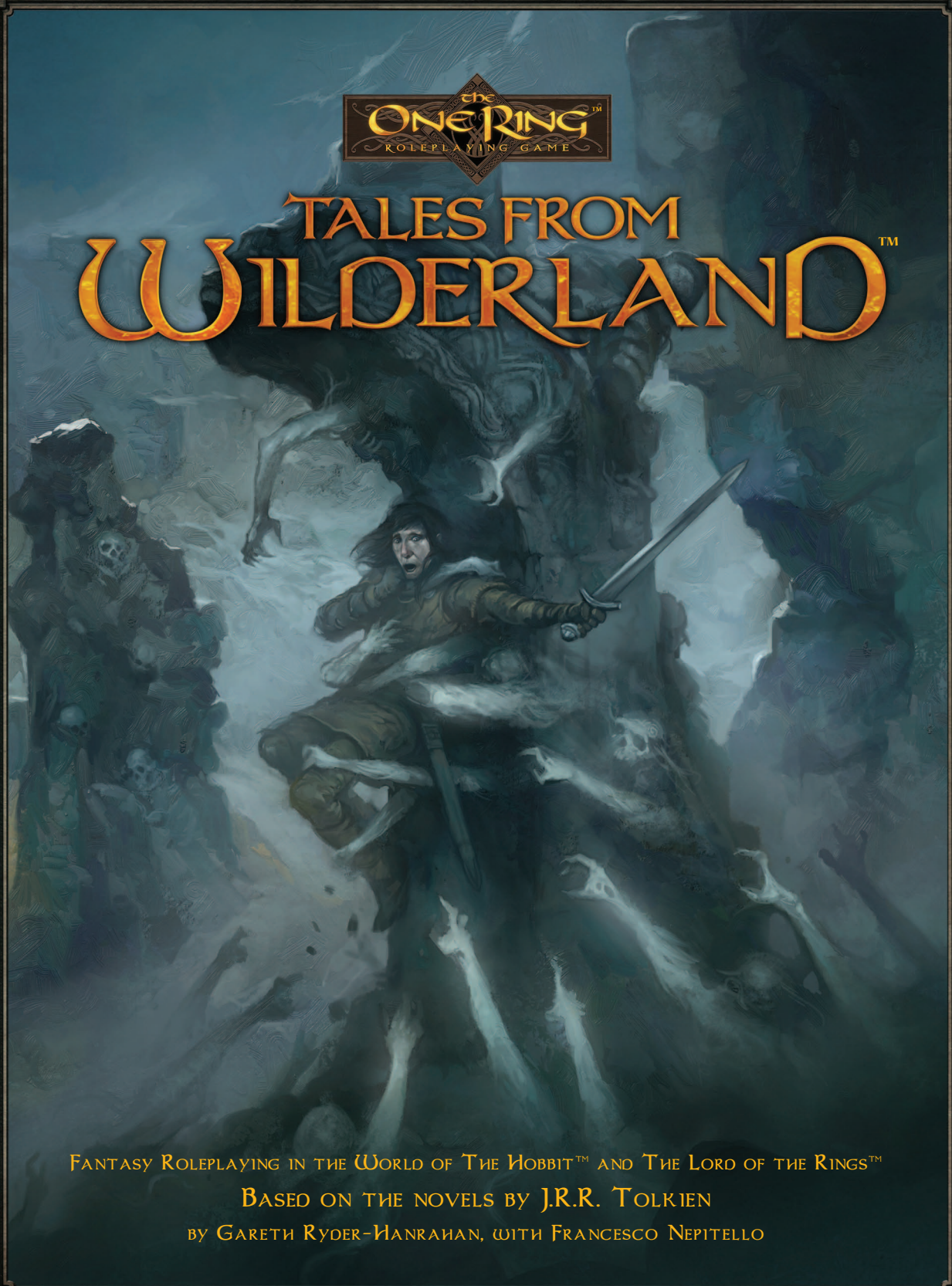

Fantasy Roleplaying in the World of The Hobbit™ and The Lord of the Rings™

Based on the novels by J.R.R. Tolkien

by Gareth Ryder-Hanrahan, with Francesco Nepitello

- CREDITS -

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- Introduction -

This guide contains seven ready-to-play adventures for your company of heroes, complete scenarios that can be played separately, or as a mini campaign spanning across a number of years. All adventures are set in the years after 2946, and take place in Wilderland. A wealth of background material expands the setting information contained in *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*, and will prove useful to Loremasters and players alike, even after all the adventures will have been played through.

The first adventure takes the companions from Lake-town across the breadth of Mirkwood, while the following four are set west of the forest. The latter two take place in Dale and the northern regions beyond the Lonely Mountain. The adventures are presented in order of increasing difficulty: while the first four adventures can be tackled by a group of relatively inexperienced adventurers, the following ones offer a greater challenge.

The seven adventures are:

Don't Leave the Path

The companions find adventure outside Lake-town and are given the chance to discover why even the hardiest of adventurers shun the forest of Mirkwood and its depths. In the process, they go and see Elves, meet a crazed hermit, and stumble into a wood of ancient and angry trees.

Of Leaves & Stewed Hobbit

The company discovers the Easterly Inn, a piece of the Shire in the land of the Beornings. But the Wild is still the Wild, and it takes more than Hobbit cooking to keep adventures at bay; in no time, the companions find themselves involved in the search for a missing trade caravan. Their quest will put them on the road to the High Pass, and see them go over hills and under hills.

Kinstrife and Dark Tidings

A sorrowful discovery along the banks of the Anduin brings the characters to Beorn's Hall. A terrible crime has been committed, but the culprit has now escaped his captors and fled into the Wild. Beorn charges the adventurers with finding the lawbreaker and bringing him to judgement – but as the company searches for their quarry, they learn that right and wrong are not always as clear-cut as one might hope.

Those Who Tarry No Longer

The company is honoured beyond measure when asked to escort an Elf-woman across Wilderland to the High Pass. Irimë of the House of Gil-Galad is heading West, to leave the shores of Middle-earth. But the passing of such a bright light under the shadow of the mountains doesn't go unnoticed, and the company is waylaid by an evil spirit. This powerful shade tries to wield Irimë's sorrow as a weapon against her. If the adventurers cannot restore her hope, then the spirit will devour a light that has shone since the First Age!

A Darkness in the Marshes

Troubled by recent news, Radagast the Brown sends the company west across the Great River, to seek the counsel of the Woodmen of Mountain Hall. There, they receive tidings that lead them south, into the Gladden Fields. Eventually, they find and explore the Dwimmerhorn, a dark fastness where a dark plot is hatching. This is a danger beyond the company's ability to defeat alone, and they flee. But in their attempt to return to Woodland Hall, they risk bringing a great evil with them.

The Crossings of Celduin

Black treachery shakes the great festivities held in Dale for the Gathering of Five Armies! Warriors are poisoned, and the next day brings news of an army approaching from the south. With many of his soldiers sickened by the poison, King Bard turns to the adventurers and sends them to hold the Crossings of the River Running for as long as they can. If the Enemy host crosses the bridge too soon, then Dale will burn.

The Watch on the Heath

The Battle at Celduin didn't end the threat to the North. The army menacing Dale was but one of the many threads woven into a foul scheme. As the Free Folks of the North are enjoying a respite, the plot is secretly coming to fruition among the dreary peaks of the Grey Mountains: an ancient and unstoppable enemy is being summoned out of the frozen wastes. Luckily, not everyone is fooled, and the company is sent to the north by the King under the Mountain, to investigate the suspicious theft of records held in the Chamber of Mazarbul under Erebor. Will the adventurers learn about the impending threat in time and find a way to prevent it before it is too late?

The Gibbet King

The main villain of adventures 4 to 7 is an evil spirit whose true name is lost and forgotten. Called the Gibbet King by his servants, he is a wraith-creature, felt by mortals only as a passing shadow, a whisper on the wind. He served for centuries as the torturer and jailer of the Necromancer of Dol Guldur, bound to its pits by the will of his Master.

When the Necromancer left his fortress in Mirkwood, he forsook his many servants and slaves - the Gibbet King among them. The spirit hid in the deepest recesses of the stronghold, and escaped notice. When he finally left Dol Guldur, he was no more than a shapeless spectre of hate and malice. In time, he learnt to use sorcery to take possession of dead bodies and thus interact with the physical world.

Today, the Gibbet King hates Sauron as much as he hates all living things, but in his wickedness he is bound to seek similar ends.

How to Use this Guide

Most of the adventures presented in this guide are self-contained, and can be played as single quests without reference to any past or future adventure. You can pick the most appropriate adventures to run based on the composition of your players' company and their journeys across the Wild.

Don't Leave the Path, Of Leaves & Stewed Hobbit, Kinstrife & Grim Tidings and *Those Who Tarry No Longer* have no direct links to the other adventures, save whispers of the Gibbet King's influence. *A Darkness in the Marshes, The Crossings of Celduin* and *The Watch on the Heath* are all interlinked, but a Loremaster can pick the connections apart easily. (For example, instead of the Gibbet King at the head of the army that attacks Dale in *The Crossings of Celduin*, make the villain an Orc-chieftain or an Easterling warlord). *A Darkness in the Marshes* and *The Watch on the Heath* are more closely linked still.

Alternatively, you can combine all seven adventures into a short campaign. The adventures should be played in the order they are presented in this guide.

The Passing of Years

If you want to follow the default pacing of gameplay suggested in *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*, playing all the adventures contained in *Tales from Wilderland* should take several years. Every scenario offers plenty of opportunities to keep the companions busy for a year of game time, as the players can easily follow their Adventuring phase with a fruitful Fellowship phase, or even start a supplemental Adventuring phase building upon the consequences of the previous one. (Some suggestions concerning the follow-up to each adventure are presented at the end of the scenario).

Even if you don't feel comfortable with playing one adventure per year of game time, we suggest that you at least let one year pass for every two adventures. A tight pace of gameplay could be as follows:

Don't Leave the Path and *Of Leaves & Stewed Hobbit* could be run over the course of the same year. *Kinstrife & Dark Tidings* is suited to be the opening adventure of a new year, while *Those Who Tarry No Longer* can be followed aptly by a Fellowship phase marking the end of that year.

A Darkness in the Marshes is well suited to be the first adventure of any given year, with *The Crossings of Celduin* taking place the following November. *The Watch on the Heath* should follow closely for an intense campaign finale.

Additional Encounter Guidelines

Tales from Wilderland introduces a new way for the Loremaster to evaluate the performance of the company during an encounter. In addition to the rules for Tolerance, the Loremaster is advised to keep track of the number of successful rolls achieved by the player-heroes during an Encounter's *Introduction* and *Interaction* stages.

At the end of an encounter, the total number of successful rolls achieved by the company can be used to determine its consequences. Every successful roll counts for one, while a great success equates to two successful rolls and an extraordinary result to three successful rolls.

Most adventures contained in this guide present the consequences of an encounter as a tiered table. Just compare the number of successful rolls the company achieved along the episode with the given entries.

First entry (usually corresponding to 0-1 successes): The encounter can barely be considered a success. Something didn't go as well as hoped, or the companions got what they were looking for but at the price of some unexpected complication.

Second entry (usually 2-4): The companions achieved the goal they set for the encounter, but nothing else.

Third entry (usually 5-6): As above, but the companions succeeded beyond their expectations, and some additional positive consequence is added to their reward.

Fourth entry (usually 7 or more): As for the second and third entries, but the company succeeded admirably and the outcome of the encounter is surprisingly positive.

The number of entries and their numerical ratings used in the adventures generally conform to that given above, but may vary slightly from encounter to encounter. These guidelines are meant to be applied as rigidly or loosely as required, to conform to the play style of the group.

- Don't Leave - the Path

- **When:** The company may undertake this quest at any time during the spring, summer or autumn.
- **Where:** The quest begins in Lake-town, on the Long Lake.
- **What:** The company are hired to escort a merchant's caravan across Mirkwood. The journey begins at the Halls of the Elvenking.
- **Why:** The Battle of Five Armies and the ensuing peace means that there is more trade and travel across the North. A man of Dale intends to capitalise on this by bringing Dalish smithcraft across Mirkwood to Woodland Hall.
- **Who:** Baldor Rivergold is the name of the merchant. He travels with his son Belgo, a youth of ten years.

Adventuring Phase

This adventure is divided into six parts, covering the journey from Esgaroth to the Forest Gate.

Part One - Where Rivers Run With Gold

The company rescue Baldor the merchant from three ruffians, and he asks them to serve as his caravan guards on the crossing of Mirkwood.

Part Two - The Edge of the Woodland Realm

Baldor has friends in Thranduil's court, so the first part of the journey is on board the Elven rafts up the Forest River. The company are escorted to the edge of the forest kingdom and warned not to leave the path.

Part Three - The Long Road

The company set off for the west, braving the perils of the dark wood.

Part Four - Castle of the Spiders

As the company make camp, Baldor falls afoul of the enchanted stream that runs through Mirkwood. Temporarily deprived of his memories, he flees into the woods and is trapped by Spiders in a ruined castle.

Part Five - The Hermit of Mirkwood

The company find shelter with a crazed hermit. Can they convince him to aid them, or is he planning to murder them in their sleep?

Part Six - The Well in the Wood

The last danger of the woods comes from the trees themselves. Their contempt for everything that goes on two legs threatens to turn into a deadly trap.

Epilogue - The Forest Gate

Where the company exits Mirkwood, and possibly reaps the benefits of their deeds.

- Part One - Where Rivers Run With Gold

The company are out in the countryside near the Long Lake. Perhaps they are returning from a previous journey, or out fishing, or simply walking by the shore. The ruins of the old Lake-town are visible in the water. Blackened poles poke out like ribs, and when the water is very, very still, one can sometimes spot the bones of Smaug the Dreadful. Sometimes, gemstones from the Dragon's fabled diamond waistcoat wash up on the shore.

The company hear someone running, and shouts of *'Help! Help!'*. A young boy about ten years old bursts out of the rushes ahead of them. He spots the company and runs towards them, waving his arms. Tears run down his cheeks.

> *"Help! Please help! My father – his guards – they're going to kill him! We're going to Mirkwood and they're going to kill him! He told me to run! Find help! Help!"*

Belgo's words tumble out in a terrified flood. The company can piece together the story: his father Baldor is a merchant of Dale. He has a caravan of trade goods,

and intended to bring it across Mirkwood. He hired three guards for protection, but these guards have now turned on him. The caravan is nearby – if the company hurry, they can rescue Baldor.

Playing Baldor

Baldor is tired and careworn, and more than a little out of his depth. He is too old and soft for long journeys, but he lost his fortune in the destruction of Lake-town and so he is forced to return to the road.

Don't be a burden to the company. Try to help the player characters.

Worry about everything, especially Belgo. Speculate about the dangers in the wood.

Speak softly but try to be persuasive. Pretend to lean on a walking-staff.

Playing Belgo

Young Belgo is ten years old, on the cusp of becoming an adult.

Take care of the ponies. Show that you are as useful as any of the company.

Never argue directly with your father, but second-guess him when talking to the player characters.

Look up at the players to give them the impression that you are smaller than they are.

Saving Baldor

Baldor and the three thugs are only a short distance away, on the path that led from old Lake-town into the forest. This path is now mostly overgrown – few people pass this way now, as the site of the town was moved after the death of the Dragon. Baldor stands with his back to a tree and a heavy branch in his hand. His three treacherous caravan guards surround him with drawn swords. One of the three has a nasty fresh welt on his face, where Baldor struck him with the branch.

Any Barding recognises the three guards as Jonar, Kelmund and Finnar, three notorious troublemakers from Lake-town. A few years ago, they were thugs in the service of the old Master. The new, wiser Master dismissed them from civic service, and they are now thieves and sell-swords. Obviously, they decided that murdering Baldor and taking his caravan was more profitable and a lot safer than braving the wilds of Mirkwood.

When the company arrive, Jonar – the biggest of the trio – tries to convince them to leave. *"Be off!"* he shouts, *"This is none of your business!"* He claims that Baldor cheated them, and that they are only taking what is due to them. When it becomes clear that the company do not believe him, then he tries to appeal to their greed. All they need to do is turn their backs for a minute, and keep their mouths shut afterwards, and he'll give them a cut of the stolen goods.

Intimidating the Thugs

The trio are craven at heart – the company can intimidate them into leaving with an **Awe** test before the fight begins. On a normal success, the thugs depart but nurse grudges against the company, and may prove to be trouble in future should the company ever return to Lake-town. On a great or extraordinary success, the thugs are so terrified that they never dare cross the company again.

Fighting the Thugs

Where words do not serve, then swords must out. The thugs are not an especially difficult group of foes, and try to surrender if reduced to half their starting Endurance. During the fight, Baldor harasses the thugs by taking wild swings with his tree-branch, moderately hindering them so that the TN of the companions to hit them is reduced by 2 (see *Complications*, on page 181 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*).

Thugs

Thug:

Attribute Level	
2	
Endurance	**Hate**
12	2
Parry	**Armour**
4	1d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 2
Movement, 2	Custom, 2
Perception, 2	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Short Sword	2
Special Abilities	
Craven	

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Short Sword	5	10	14	Disarm

Baldor's Offer

Once the thugs are dealt with, Baldor throws down his branch and embraces his son. He then expresses his thanks for the company's prompt rescue.

> *"Thank you! Thank you! You arrived in the very nick of time."*

He explains that he set out from Lake-town with his son and the three thugs. He is a merchant and a travelling trader, and his four ponies are carrying iron tools and toys from Dale that he intends to sell to the folk of Woodland Hall. He has arranged with the Elves for passage through their lands. He knows that Mirkwood is dangerous, and so he looked in Esgaroth for guards who were brave enough to risk the crossing of the forest. It seems that he chose poorly.

He offers the job of guarding the caravan to the company instead. He promises to pay them in coin or goods (two points of Treasure each) once they reach the Forest Gate.

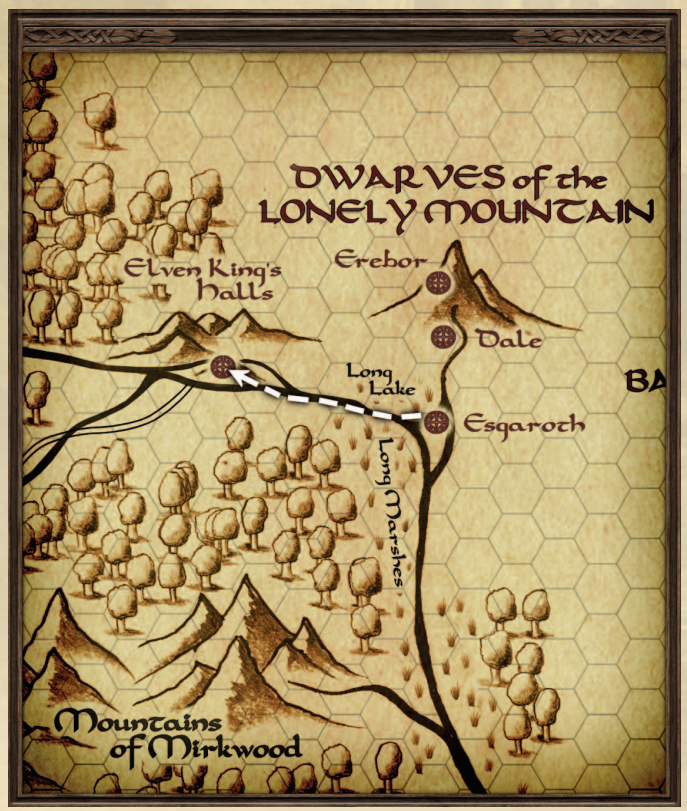
Baldor's History

If the company question Baldor with **Courtesy** or **Riddle**, they can learn the following as they travel:

- He was once a rich merchant of Lake-town, but he lost a great deal when the Dragon fell on the city.
- Not only was his fortune destroyed, but his wife Halla also perished. He carried his young son out of the flames, but could not find his wife.
- While others have found prosperity in the years since the Battle of Five Armies, he has not been so lucky. He moved to Dale when its reconstruction started, but he has yet to rebuild his former wealth.
- Young Belgo is a good lad, his father's pride and joy.

The Journey

Baldor has already planned the journey, although well-travelled companions can make suggestions. He plans to meet with Elvish friends of his at the edge of Mirkwood, and these Elves will accompany the caravan up the river on paddle-boats. From the Elvenking's hall, the company will set off down the Forest Path to the west side.



The caravan consists of Baldor, Belgo, and four ponies. He already has plenty of travelling supplies for the company. Baldor leads the company along the banks of the Forest River, taking a well-travelled path that runs alongside the waters.

- Part Two -
The Edge of the Woodland Realm

At twilight, a trio of rafts emerge from the mists on the river. Green-cloaked figures punt these rafts to the shore. The Elves greet Baldor and the company warmly – the merchant is well known to them. The Elves are amused and fascinated by Belgo; they say there are few children among them in these days.

The ponies are unloaded and their burdens transferred to the rafts. The animals are initially wary about getting onto the rafts, but one of the Elves whispers in the ponies' ears, and instantly all four of the animals become perfectly calm, happily trot onto the rafts and stand stock-still in the middle.

Once departed, the Elves expertly pilot their rafts against the current of the Forest River. After several days of slow travel, the land on either side of the rafts rises and turns stony and wooded, and the company pass into the shadow of the trees. It is as though the rafts are sailing up a dark tunnel, as the branches interlace overhead into a dark canopy. The company glimpse tall hills in gaps between the trees, until the river widens and the trees grow thinner once again. Here, a bay opens, and huts cling close to a shingly shore. The Elves steer up a stream which flows out of a rocky canyon. The canyon walls grow higher and higher, until the rafts pass a portcullis and suddenly they find themselves in the caves of the Elvenking.

Guests of the Elves

Sadly, the company see little of the Elvenking's halls. Baldor is met by a friend of his, an Elf named Lindar who is master of the King's cellars. Baldor is welcome here – the other characters may not be so lucky. If the company are unable to convince Lindar of their good character, they are obliged to wait under guard in the cellars until the caravan is ready to depart. Elves of Mirkwood are of course allowed to wander the halls as they wish.

Set Tolerance

Lindar respects Wisdom over Valour. Those who travel with Elves are welcome; increase the Tolerance by 1 if there is an Elf in the group. Reduce the Tolerance by 1 for each Dwarf in the company. Remember to add the Standing of any Elves to the Tolerance.

Introductions

In the Halls of a King of the Elves the use of **Courtesy** is obligatory. Less courteous companions may want to use **Riddle** to withhold some personal information: the TN for such rolls is at TN 16.

Interaction

Lindar suggests that as the Elves do not know the company, they should remain here to 'guard the supplies'. In two days, the Elves will bring the company to the edge of Thranduil's realm. In the meantime, they can remain here in the caves; Lindar promises to send down some bread and wine.

To win Lindar's trust, the company need three successful tests of **Persuade**, **Courtesy** or **Song**. If they show they are worthy guests, then they are permitted to stay in better quarters in the upper caves, and may even hear the Elves singing. The combination of soft beds and good company relieves the company of any Fatigue they have accumulated so far.

The Journey Begins

After two days, Lindar and some other Elves escort the company out of the caves by a secret route, and bring them some miles down the Elf-path. This part of the wood is not so oppressive; the path is lined with beeches, and sunlight filters through the trees to dapple everything with green-gold light. This region still preserves the beauty and peace of Greenwood the Great. Lindar warns that the company will soon enter more perilous regions, and he gives them one key piece of advice – don't leave the path! The path is mostly clear of trouble, but the same cannot be said of the woods beyond.

Loading the Ponies

Companions can profit from the fact that they are travelling with ponies and load some of their gear upon them. Companions travelling with ponies reduce the total Fatigue increase by 1, due to failed Fatigue tests (as per the rules on page 159 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*).

– Part Three –
The Long Road

Lindar and the Elves have led the company to the point where the Enchanted Stream crosses the Elf-path. They bring the company across by boat – the ponies are temporarily relieved of their load – and the Elves warn the characters not to drink from the stream. Once their feet are firmly set on the path, Lindar bids them good luck, and vanishes into the shadows of the trees. The company are now on their own, and face a long journey.

The Journey

The companions must follow the Elf-path almost across the whole width of Mirkwood. While walking on the path eases the toll of the journey somewhat (the forest doesn't darken their hearts as grievously as if they were leaving

the trail - see *Corruption Tests* below), being parted from the light of the sun and the open air for so long is going to put the company to the test.

The road from the Enchanted Stream to the Forest Gate is 160 miles. Going through Mirkwood is very hard, so it will take the company 24 days to cross the whole forest. This calls for a number of Fatigue tests at TN 16.

In Spring: 5 Fatigue tests
In Summer: 4 Fatigue tests
In Autumn: 6 Fatigue tests
In Winter: 8 Fatigue tests

Instead of rolling everything at once, the Loremaster may split these tests up between the other encounters. For example, the company might make one test before Part 4, another two tests between Part 4 and Part 5, and another test after Part 5.

Planning the Route

The route is clear – follow the path. However, characters may still make **Lore** tests to remember the best ways to travel and survive in Mirkwood.

Corruption Tests

The darkness of the forest weighs heavily on the company's spirits. Travellers in wild lands like the forest must make a Corruption test once per week, so the company must make at least four tests while in Mirkwood. As long as they are on the path, the TN is 12; tests made off the path are TN 14.

Combining Hazards

If several players all trigger a Hazard episode by rolling an , then you can combine more hazards into one more complicated challenge instead of resolving each hazard individually. Instead of getting caught in the rain, and then crossing dangerous terrain, and finally running into a band of Orcs, try combining all three. The company is caught in a sudden torrential rainstorm, and need to find shelter. The guide tries to lead them to a cave they glimpsed in the distance, but the rain has turned the hillside into mud and the company are in danger of slipping into a ravine. Finally, they reach the cave, only to find it is home to a band of Orcs.

Alternatively, several trivial hazards like *Uncomfortable Lodgings* or *No Way Forward* can be replaced by a single really dangerous hazard, like a wandering Stone-Troll.

Northern Mirkwood

While the truly perilous parts of the forest are away down to the south, in the Heart of Mirkwood and around Dol Guldur, that does not mean that travelling in Northern Mirkwood is a pleasant stroll through the woods.

Hazards Suggestions

Here are some useful suggestions for setting up one or more Hazard episodes specific to these parts of Mirkwood.

Spider Webs (Guide - Dangerous Meeting)
The company enter a region of the forest where the trees are covered in spider-webs. None of these webs cross the path, but this is a very dangerous place to make camp.

The company's Guide must make a **Travel** test to keep the company moving. If this test is failed, then the company fails to get clear of the spider-haunted region before night falls and they have to make camp. If they camp near the spider-webs, then the company are attacked by Attercops at night (assume two Attercops per companion).

Split Path (Guide - Wrong Choices)
The path seems to divide in two up ahead. Which one is the true path? The Guide must make a **Travel** test to guess which is the real path, and which is a hunting trail. If the test fails, then the company goes down the wrong path. Their next Fatigue tests are made at one difficulty level higher (+2 TN).

Falling Branches (Scout - Strain)
The company pass through a region where the trees are rotten and dead. In several places, huge rotten branches hang low over the path, and could break at any time. The Scout must make an **Explore** test to mark the most dangerous branches. If this test is failed, then a branch falls on a random member of the company, causing that character to lose an amount of Endurance equal to the roll of a Success die.

Spiders in the Woods (Scout - Dangerous Meeting)
The Scout spots a band of Attercops, who are weaving a web across the path to catch the characters. The company can either attack (two Attercops per companion), or else use **Explore** to find a way around the web without attacking.

Track of the Werewolf (Huntsman - Despair)
The Huntsman finds a gigantic paw-print in the mud. It is definitely that of a wolf, but it is incredibly large and heavy – the beast must be at least the size of a bear! The character must make a **Hunting** test. If successful, the character correctly determines that the print is old, and that the wolf is no longer nearby. If unsuccessful, the hunter mistakenly determines that the print is fresh and that a gigantic wolf is lurking in the woods up ahead. The Huntsman panics and loses 1 point of Hope, or 2 Hope if they rolled an .

Fat Pheasants (Huntsman - Wrong Choices)
The huntsman spots a flock of juicy fat black pheasants on a branch. He is permitted a single **Hunting** test to bring one down before the rest scatter. If this test succeeds, the company eat well that night. If the test fails, the pheasants vanish, and the company are tormented by the thought of what they might have had if they were luckier. This discontent increases the Target Number of their next Fatigue test by one level.

Spooked Pony (Look-Out - Misery)
Some movement in the woods at night startles one of the ponies. Unless the Look-out reacts in time, the pony bolts into the shadows of the trees and vanishes. A successful **Awareness** test is required to grab the animal's bridle before it flees. If the pony is lost, it takes with it a portion of Baldor's trade goods, making the difficult journey less rewarding and the company Miserable in the meantime.

Blanket of Butterflies (Look-Out - Fatigue)
A flock of huge purple butterflies flutter down from the treetops and nest on the sleeping company. These butterflies are like a velvet shroud; if left undisturbed, they smother their victims. The butterflies hum a lullaby as they land. The Look-out must make an **Awareness** roll to stay awake; if successful, he fends off the unnatural sleepiness and drives the butterflies away. If this roll fails, then the humming of the butterflies puts him to sleep too. The company are saved when one of the insects is inhaled by a sleeping companion, and his choking snorts wake the rest. In that time, though, all the company were partially suffocated and feel drained. Add Fatigue again, or twice if the Look-out failed the test with a roll of an .

Forest Gloom (All Companions - Corruption)
The wood's oppressive darkness drains the company's spirits; everyone must make a Corruption test immediately to avoid gaining a point of Shadow.

Belgo's Talisman

Belgo wears a talisman around his neck as a reminder of his lost mother. This talisman plays a key role in the final part of this adventure, so the Loremaster should establish its existence earlier in the game. For example, if the company are attacked by spiders, then Belgo could drop the talisman in the struggle, and one of the other characters could spot it.

- Part Four -
Castle of the Spiders

The Enchanted Stream runs through Mirkwood, and the main course of the waters crosses the Forest Path far to the east of the company's present location. There are other streams in Mirkwood, though, and they too are not always wholesome to drink from.

This part of the adventure begins when the company make camp. Their scouts find an excellent place to rest for the night, where the path opens into a pleasant, grassy forest clearing. Any Elf in the party recognises this spot as one of the open-air feast-halls of the Elvenking, although this particular field has not been used in many years. A sparkling stream of fresh water runs along the edge of the clearing. The company make camp – if the player characters mutter about wanting to push on, then young Belgo throws himself down on the grassy floor and announces that he is much too tired to travel any more that day.

Presumably, the company set watches during the night.

Baldor's Error

During the night, Baldor the merchant wakes up. He leaves his bedroll and exchanges a few words with whoever is on watch, and complains about bad dreams. He is still half-asleep, but his mouth is dry so he wanders over to the stream to take a drink of water. Moonlight shimmers on the dancing waters, and what was safe and pure during the day is not always unchanged at night.

When Baldor drinks from the stream, it robs him of his memories. The last five years fall away from Baldor's mind. He forgets where he is, and who he has become. Suddenly, he believes he is back in Esgaroth on that terrible night five years ago, when the Dragon came to the Long Lake.

He sees the company and mistakes them for bandits who have kidnapped him. All he knows is that he has to get back to Lake-town, to save his wife and child from the Dragon. He does not even recognise Belgo – in his mind, Belgo is a laughing five-year-old, not a prematurely serious boy of ten. Belgo looks into his father's eyes, and sees no spark of recognition or love. His father looks at the boy as if he was a stranger.

"Who are you? Where am I? Where... there is fire under the Mountain! Those fools have woken the Dragon! I must find Halla! I... you've kidnapped me! You rogues! Where is Belgo?"

An **Insight** test makes it clear that Baldor is not in his right mind – his eyes burn with crazed intensity, and he clearly does not recognise the company. If anyone approaches him, he turns and sprints headlong in the forest.

Following Baldor

The company need to decide what is to be done quickly. The longer they wait, the farther Baldor strays from the path. Will they all go after him? Will they take the ponies? Belgo volunteers to remain behind to watch the animals, while the characters rescue his father.

The most likely solution is that they leave the boy to guard the ponies, as this clearing seems like a safe place. If one or more player characters stay behind, then the Loremaster could have the clearing attacked by spiders to put them in peril.

Normally, tracking someone through the forest would require a **Hunting** test, but in this case Baldor trampled through the muddy ground near the stream, leaving big deep footprints that even a blind Dwarf could follow. However, the characters have to hunt around for the trail with torches until dawn breaks, so it takes them several hours to follow Baldor's route. The trail plunges into the dark woods, until it just suddenly stops, as if Baldor vanished into thin air. Searching around reveals a few strands of webbing hanging from two trees nearby. A roll of **Riddle** determines that Baldor blundered into a spider-web at such speed that he pulled the web off the trees it was anchored too. Looking around with a **Search** test identifies drag marks on the ground. He must have gotten tangled up in the web, then something dragged him off deeper into the woods.

Following the trail brings the company to another clearing.

The Castle

A castle stands on a low hill amid the sea of green trees. Who knows if it was Elves or Men who built this castle, but it has fallen into ruin. No trace remains of the defensive walls or outbuildings; all that remains are a single round tower and part of what must have once been the keep. The keep has crumbled and collapsed in on itself, leaving only one corner still standing as an L-shaped wall. Both tower and wall are covered in a dense shroud of cobwebs, and web-strands run between tower and wall.

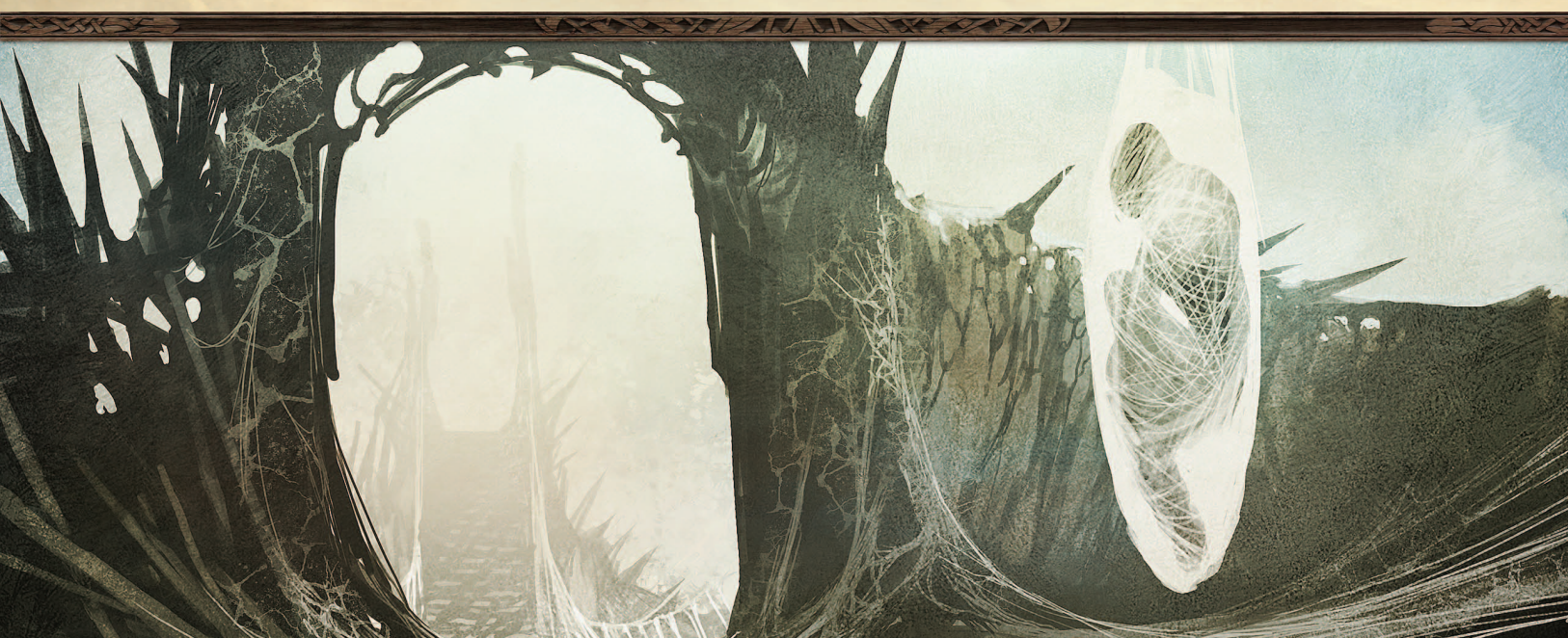
Hanging from the very top of the wall is a wriggling bundle of webbing. It must be Baldor.

There is no sign of any spiders at first glance, but there are any number of places where they could be hiding. The only sound is the occasional thump as Baldor wrestles and struggles against his bonds.

To get to Baldor, the company need to climb the wall, or else climb the still-intact spiral staircase in the tower and then clamber across the webbing to the top of the wall.

Climbing the Wall

The wall is thirty feet high and is tricky to climb, as the character must try to avoid getting stuck on the cobwebs.



Climbing the wall is a prolonged action requiring three **Athletics** tests.

If a test fails, the character gets stuck on the cobwebs and must cut their way free, which attracts the attention of the spiders – see *The March of the Spiders*, below. Cutting through the web requires a successful **Dagger** test.

If a test fails with a , then the character falls from the wall - from 10 feet if the first test is failed, 20 if the second test is failed, 30 if the third test is the one that sends the character plummeting to earth (see the rules for *Falling*, on page 184 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*).

The Tower Stairs

The spiral staircase in the tower is mostly intact, so the characters can easily make their way up to the top. From there, they can see a 'bridge' of spider-webs running from the tower to the top of the wall – but they can also see dozens of spiders nesting on the far side of the ruined keep. The spiders seem to be sleeping, but any vibration on the web will alert them.

Crossing the bridge is a prolonged action requiring three **Stealth** tests.

A failed roll alerts the spiders; failing with a alerts the spiders *and* means that the character is caught on the web; again, cutting free requires a successful **Dagger** test.

Rescuing Baldor

Once a character reaches Baldor, they can drag his body to the top of the wall with an **Athletics** test and then cut him loose. Baldor is dazed and confused, but can clamber down the wall or across the bridge with the character's help.

Again, tests of **Stealth** or **Athletics** are needed to avoid alerting the spiders.

March of the Spiders

If the companions reach Baldor, cut him loose and escape the scene without failing a single skill test, then they successfully rescue the merchant out from under the noses of the spiders (if spiders have noses) without being seen. However, if one of the characters pulls on the wrong strand, then the spiders come marching.

In the first round, the characters feel the web moving, but no spider appears. In the second round, a single spider arrives to menace the characters. In the third round, two spiders; in the fourth, three and so on to a maximum of six spiders in the seventh round of combat.

All the spiders are Attercops – weak individually, but if the company are surrounded by twenty or more spiders, then they are in terrible danger. The Attercops target characters who are stuck in the web.

Doomed!

If luck turns against the characters and it seems as though they are about to be defeated by the spiders, then the Loremaster can rescue them by having the hermit show up with a bow. The hermit laughs and shouts nonsense while he fires deadly accurate shots at the biggest of the spiders.

Escape!

After the characters rescue Baldor, they still need to make their way back to the path, and they must do so with a host of brown hairy spiders scuttling after them. The spiders move with unnatural speed, leaping from tree to tree and trailing strands of webbing like fishing lures as they try to snare the companions. Baldor is still confused after drinking from the Enchanted Stream, but even in his witless state, he recognises that he is better off with these strange companions than as a spider's supper.

After several minutes' running, the characters arrive back at the clearing, where they meet Belgo and the ponies. The spiders do not dare cross the path.

Baldor recovers most of his memories after a few hours' rest and conversation with his son. He seems unsteady and wary for the rest of the journey. He tells the characters that he thought that he was back in Esgaroth when Smaug attacked, and relates the tale of how his wife Hilla was lost when the Dragon fell on Lake-town. Baldor was able to carry his young son out of the flames, but never saw Hilla again.

Gathering Darkness

During the rest of the journey, point out that there is now a wedge between Baldor and Belgo. The boy feels betrayed and lonely, and Baldor is too confused and nervous to comfort his son – the memory-erasing stream washed away most of Baldor's memory of the last five years, and he finds it hard to reconcile his surviving memories of his son with the present situation.

In game terms, poor Belgo has picked up several Shadow points due to anguish and terror. He spends more and more time toying with the amulet he wears around his neck.

- Part Five - The Hermit

The Hermit of Mirkwood had a name once, but he lost it in the dungeons of Dol Guldur. He remembers only parts of his life before the darkness. He was a Woodman, a warrior, a hero. He remembers sun on the trees, the weight of an axe in his hand, the smoke rising from the cooking fires at the end of a long hunt, the warmth of the Great House when the winter winds howled outside. All that was lost when he was captured. For many years he suffered in the dungeons, tormented by Orcs and other horrors.

Then, five years ago, the Shadow was driven from the Hill of Sorcery. The Hermit heard the noise of a tremendous storm overhead, a storm so loud it woke him in his gaol cell deep underground. He found the door was unlocked, and he fled through the endless warren of tunnels until he came to a drain that opened into sunlight. He fled, naked and shrieking and quite quite mad, into the forest, and here he has lived alone since that day.

The Thunderstorm

The company are travelling along the Elf-path when a sudden storm descends on Mirkwood, turning the forest as dark as midnight. High winds tear through the tree-tops, sending a hail of leaves and twigs down on the company. Larger branches creak ominously, and rotten boughs crack and tumble. The clouds open as though some great hand picked up the whole of the Long Lake and dumped it on the forest. Thunder and lightning crash overhead, incredibly loud and perilously close, and water starts trickling along the trees more and more copiously until dozens of little streams and rills start winding their way through the forest floor. Further travel is impossible – the company must find a dry place within sight of the path.

Searching around, one of the company's scouts spots an unusual sight at some distance from the path. There is a huge dead hollow tree up ahead, illuminated by a bright flash of lightning, and a thin plume of woodsmoke rises from the top. Someone is living inside the hollow tree! Searching around the base of the tree lets the characters find a tunnel that runs between the roots into the tree's interior.

There is no sign of anyone around or inside, but they cannot be far away if they left a cooking fire unattended. Even if the company are willing to brave the weather and travel on, neither Baldor nor Belgo is strong enough to keep going in the teeth of the storm. The hermit's tree is the only source of shelter to hand.

The Hermit's Tree

The hermit's tree is hollow on the inside. The entrance tunnel opens into a single round room. The walls are the dead wood of the tree, and the roof is a mix of bark and thatch that keeps most of the wind and rain out. It is not as snug as a Hobbit-hole, but it's better than being outside in Mirkwood in the storm. There is a ring of stones in the middle of the room, and a small cooking-fire burns there, with some hunks of meat (one hopes a rabbit or a squirrel) cooking on a spit. Other unidentifiable bits of meat hang from the ceiling on long black strings.

There is a single bed of leaves and furs near the fire. Jars of water and baskets of fruit sit in a cool muddy hollow at the back of the room. Any Woodman would recognise the style of the handiwork. Looking around with **Search** makes a grim discovery, though – the walls are covered in woodcarvings depicting horrible faces and monsters of all sorts. Whoever lives here is tormented by nightmares.

Encountering the Hermit

After a few minutes, the company hear scratching outside, as someone arrives at the entrance tunnel and wriggles their way into the hollow tree. The characters smell the hermit before they see him; an incredibly rank smell wafts from his filthy rags and scarred, rail-thin body. His wrists

and ankles are scarred. The hermit shrieks in alarm when he finds the company in his home, and levels a spear at them, but he does not attack.

Playing the Hermit

Talk to yourself. Argue with yourself. Mutter random nonsense.

You're crazy, but you know you're crazy. Get irritated if the characters try to soothe you. Hunch your shoulders, chatter your teeth, sniff the air like an animal.

Set Tolerance

The initial Tolerance is equal to the highest Wisdom in the company. Increase the Tolerance by 1 if there are any Woodmen in the company. Reduce the Tolerance by 1 if there are any Elves or Dwarves in the company.

Introduction

The company must explain who they are and why they have trespassed in the hermit's home. Simply apologising for the intrusion with **Courtesy** is enough.

Interaction

The first thing to do is to ask for permission to stay with **Courtesy** or **Persuade**. Offering the hermit food and drink helps win him over – he is obviously starving and gobbles down anything the company offer him.

If the company ask who the hermit is, he shrugs.

> *"Don't need a name, do I? There's only me, I know who I am. I'm me. You need name, though. You're not me. Had a name once, but they took it."*

Asking about the carvings on the walls alarms him. He made those to scare away his nightmares. There is a darkness in the wood, he insists, a great shadow. The light drove it away, but it is growing again. He hears it creep up on him as he sleeps. That's why he hides in this tree, and why he stays away from Men. He knows that the Shadow crawls into the hearts of Men and turns them into beasts. Why, any of the company could be servants of the Shadow.

Unless the company immediately reassure him that they are all enemies of the Necromancer, possibly with the help of a **Persuade** roll, he attacks them.

Wolfbiter

If the company win his trust, and if there is a Woodman in the company, then the hermit reaches into his tattered rags and produces a broken piece of metal. It is the remains of a once-magnificent axe-head. The Hermit presses it into the hands of a companion, saying that the Shadow hides in *things* and it is better to have nothing of value, because the darkness could be hiding in a stone or an egg-shell or a gemstone or a ring. He carried this axe-head for too long, and now he wants the characters to take it away.

A successful **Craft** or **Lore** roll identifies the piece of metal as a shard from a famous axe called *Wolfbiter* (Woodmen heroes recognise the item right away). The weapon was an heirloom of the folk of Woodland Hall, but was lost when one of their chieftain's sons was captured by Orcs.

After a few minutes, the Hermit grows tired of the conversation, and falls asleep. The company can stay in the hollow tree for the rest of the night, but must depart in the morning once the storm has passed.

Failing the Encounter

If the characters exceed the Tolerance set for the encounter, then the Hermit screams at them to leave his house. If they agree to do so, then they find that the worst of the storm has passed, but the company still see their Fatigue rating increase by 1 point. If they refuse, then the Hermit attacks; killing the Hermit in his home is a misdeed worth at least 3 Shadow Points (see *Misdeeds* on page 224 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*).

- Part Six -
The Well in the Wood

The western reaches of Mirkwood are grim and dangerous. Some woods were inhabited by Men once, and the trees still remember the bite of the axe. This part of the forest is far from the Shadow in the south, but its depths are unwelcoming nonetheless and have no love for anything that walks on two legs.

Still, the air in some places is not so stagnant and heavy, and the light is brighter. Sometimes, through gaps in the canopy, the company can see the open sky above. In the filtered sunlight, the company see stones scored with runes, or piled rocks that show that Men once lived in these parts. One day soon, they will come around a bend in the path and see the end of the road and the Forest Gate as the land slopes down towards the Vales of Anduin.

The Ancient Wood

The day after the storm sees the sun rising on a warm morning (unusually warm if it's autumn). Even if the company is still in the shadow of Mirkwood, they feel the temperature rising. As the company marches on, the companions begin to feel very hot. Towards midday, a sense of sleepiness seems to creep out of the ground and up their legs. Flies buzz round their ears, and water trickling from a hundred rills sounds like a half-whispered lullaby.

A short distance ahead of the company there is an old stone well, and at the bottom of that well lives something nameless and malignant. The ancient trees living in this area have struck a deal with the thing, and lure to it any traveller who dare tread upon their roots.

When the company is in the area close to the well, call for a Corruption test (TN 16). All those who fail gain a Shadow point as they start feeling downhearted and worn out. If at least half of the companions fail the roll, the company agrees to stop for a midday break.

If the company stop, they choose a place at a short distance from the path. Close by, the mouth of the old well opens. The well is not readily visible, as it is simply a low ring of stones around a hole in the ground, currently covered by fallen leaves and thick undergrowth. Those companions who do not act as Look-outs feel compelled to take a nap after a quick meal. As soon as they close their

eyes, they start having vivid dreams. If the companions do not agree to stop (less than half the company failed their roll), those who failed the Corruption test begin to have strange intuitions instead.

Dreams and Intuitions

The wood that the company is travelling across is weaving a spell to send the companions towards the thing lurking at the bottom of the well. Whether they are sleeping or still marching, the heroes who failed the Corruption test receive suggestions from the ancient and malevolent trees.

The companions dream or feel that something of great importance is nearby, if only they can find it. Tie these dreams or visions into the characters' Shadow weaknesses. A Scholar might dream that there is a book describing many secrets of the Enemy at the bottom of a well nearby; a Treasure Hunter might glimpse gold inside it, while a Wanderer is strangely drawn to leave the path and explore the nearby woods.

Under the Spell

If any character succumbs to a bout of madness while near the well, they run towards it. If none of the characters has such a fit, then it falls to young Belgo to be the victim. The boy is tormented by dreams that his mother's ghost is nearby, calling him from the trees. With his father half-lost to him because of the Enchanted Stream's theft of memories, Belgo is uniquely vulnerable to the lure of the trees. He runs off into the wood, crying his mother's name and holding his talisman tightly.

If Belgo, or a companion, is drawn into the woods, he crashes through the trees, leaving the path. Their companions can either try to restrain the victims, or else follow them into the woods to the well.

The Old Well

The well itself is some twenty feet deep. A stone ledge juts out of the wall half-way down, and the bottom of the shaft is choked with ropy plant growths, like thick roots or the tangled stems of a creeper vine. Among the ropy vines are many old bones, the remains of previous victims of the thing in the well. An old rotten rope hangs down into the well, but putting any weight on it snaps the rope instantly.

The first victim to reach the well throws himself into it. If it is Belgo, he lands heavily on the stone ledge. A player character who jumps into the well falls to the bottom and lands among the vines, falling for the full twenty feet.

The Creature Attacks

When someone falls into the well, or is at least within ten yards from its mouth, the ropy vines unfold and attack. The lashing tentacles are all guided by one purpose, and try to wrap around the companions to strangle and crush them.

The companions who failed the Corruption test are still under the power of the spell set upon them by the wood: they don't see the creature as a horrible monster, but as whatever dream or vision drew them here. Belgo sees his mother embracing him; a character who came here in search of gold sees gold coins and jewels at the bottom of the well, and thinks he is digging them out of the ground, when he is actually being strangled by the creature. As a consequence, they cannot attack the creature in any way, and cannot be persuaded to stay away from it.

Victims are freed from their madness if the creature is wounded, or if another character helps them snap out of it. For example, if Belgo's talisman is torn from his grasp, then he sees the creature for what it really is.

Fighting the Creature

Characters inside the well can fight only assuming a Forward stance, and are considered to be *severely hindered* both attacking and defending (the TN to hit the creature is raised by +4, while the TN for the creature to hit them is reduced by -4). Climbing out of the well requires an **Athletics** test. If a character tries to climb out while in combat with the creature, then any successful attack from the creature drags the climbing character back to the bottom of the well.

Companions outside the well can fight normally. The companions harm the thing by hacking at its many tentacle-like arms. Every Endurance loss inflicted is deducted normally from the Endurance rating of the creature. If the creature is wounded twice, or it is reduced to 0 Endurance and wounded (see Great size) its gnarled tentacles slither back into the well and vanish into the mud at the bottom.

The Thing in the Well

"There are older and fouler things than Orcs in the deep places of the world."

Not even the Wise might guess whether the creature in the well is a part of the wicked wood or something that crept out of dark waters under Mirkwood.

The Thing in the Well:

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
45	6
Parry	Armour
4	3d
Skills	
Personality, 0	Survival, 0
Movement, 2	Custom, 0
Perception, 3	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Tentacle Lash	3
Strangle	3
Special Abilities	
Many Tentacles	Seize Victim
Great Size	

Many Tentacles: Every round, the creature may attack up to three different opponents attacking it in a close combat stance. OR, reduce its Hate point score by one point to attack ALL opponents fighting in close combat.

Weapons*:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Tentacle Lash	5		14	-
Strangle	6	10	14	-

Notes

Tentacle Lash: *The thing attacks using its ropy, root-like arms and tentacles.*

Strangle: *When the creature has taken hold of a victim, it tries to crush it tightening its coils.*

*The thing normally attacks using its **Tentacle Lash** skill. If successful, it applies its *Seize Victim* ability to immobilise its victims and then attack them using **Strangle**.

- Epilogue -
The Forest Gate

From the well, it is only a short few days travel to the edge of the woods. The company emerge into blazing sunlight and a refreshing breeze. From here, Baldor intends to travel south to trade with the Woodmen and the Beornings; these lands are protected by Beorn's folk, so there is little danger of bandits and he no longer needs the company's services. He thanks them and pays them what he promised.

The company have passed through Mirkwood and lived to tell the tale. Wilderland lies before them!

Fellowship Phase

If a Fellowship phase follows this adventure, then the company could continue with Baldor to Woodland Hall and stay there, to possibly turn the hall into a sanctuary. Once there, they might consider returning the shard of the axe *Wolfbiter* to their rightful owners, the Woodmen of the House of Woodland Hall.

If they do so, they are invited to meet their Council of Elders, and then presented with gifts worth one point of Treasure each. Moreover, from now on they can consider both Woodland Hall AND the nearby Woodmen-town as sanctuaries.

- of leaves - & stewed hobbit

- **When:** The company may undertake this quest at any time during summer or autumn, in any year from 2946 onwards.

- **Where:** The adventure begins at the Easterly Inn, a new establishment on the road from the Old Ford to the Forest Gate of Mirkwood, and then leads across the Great River to the High Pass.

- **What:** A caravan of goods and supplies from the Shire has failed to arrive on time, and the innkeeper, one Dodinas Brandybuck, esq., newly arrived in the Wild, fears for his brother's safety. The characters are asked to look for signs of the caravan and ensure the safety of Dinodas Brandybuck and the trade goods.

- **Why:** The new Easterly Inn could be a haven for travellers or even a Sanctuary for the player characters if it survives, so protecting the inn is a good deed for all who adventure in the Wild. More prosaically, Dodinas offers a small sum of money and other treasures if the companions find his brother.

- **Who:** The object of the quest is Dinodas 'Dindy' Brandybuck, the younger brother of the innkeeper.

Adventuring Phase

This adventure is divided into six parts, comprising the initial Encounter at the inn, the journeys to and from the High Pass and the dangers encountered there.

Part One - The Easterly Inn

The first part of the adventure describes how it came to pass that a Hobbit opened an inn in the middle of the Wild, the history of the Brandybuck brothers, and the fate of the missing Dinodas. The Easterly Inn is described in detail, as the company may return here again and again on their travels.

Part Two - Searching The High Pass

This section deals with the journey across Wilderland to the foothills of the Misty Mountains and the High Pass. The company encounter several dangers on this journey, and pass through the ruins of a town built many centuries ago. They find signs that the caravan was attacked.

Part Three - Battle at the Ringfort

The company comes upon the survivors of the caravan, and aid them in a desperate battle against a Goblin host. The company is victorious (or else perish in the battle!), but discover that the Goblins carried off Dinodas as they fled.

Part Four - Under the Hills

Following the Goblin kidnappers brings the adventurers into the tunnels under the Misty Mountains. After braving these dark passages, they find that the Goblins have imprisoned Dinodas with an unbreakable chain.

Part Five - The Goblin Feast

The reputation of Hobbit cooking has reached even the caves of the Goblins, and they demand that Dinodas cook them a feast. The adventurers can use this feast to trick the Goblins into fighting amongst themselves, or to steal the key and free Dinodas from his bonds.

Epilogue - Back to the Inn

After rescuing Dinodas, the company returns to the Easterly Inn for their reward.

- Part One - The Easterly Inn

In a hole in the ground there lived a Hobbit. Four Hobbits, in fact, with a fifth coming to join them. The Hobbit in question was one Dodinas Brandybuck, formerly of Buckland in the Shire, but now a resident of Wilderland. Above the newly-dug hole there was a newly-built inn, so new it still smelled of sawdust and glue, and the white-washed walls were actually white and not yellowed with pipe-smoke and spilled beer. He lived in the hole with his wife Agatha and his two young sons, and there was a branch of the hole awaiting the arrival of his brother Dinodas.

Dodinas – or Dody, as his friends called him (and he had a knack for making friends) – once considered himself to be a well-travelled Hobbit. He had gone as far as Bree, which for most Hobbits constitutes about twice the journey of a lifetime, and dined out on his tales of strange, exotic folk and unusual customs. On one trip to Bree, in the common-room of the Prancing Pony, he met another Hobbit – the famous (or infamous) Bilbo Baggins.

The two fell to sharing stories, and for once Dody was the one who was flabbergasted and entranced by the other's stories of distant lands. Compared to Bilbo's journey There and Back Again, Dody had hardly stepped outside his front door. After several hours and several pints, Bilbo invited Dody to visit him at Bag End for dinner the following Sunday. Dody brought his younger brother Dindy and his wife Agatha along.

The dinner involved several bottles of wine and more tales of Wilderland, as well as innumerable courses. Dodinas declared that he was determined to outdo Bilbo, Dinodas climbed on the table and sang a story about giants, Bilbo enthusiastically showed them his collection of maps and diaries, and Agatha... well, Agatha sipped her wine and thought about practicalities. When Agatha Took married Dody Brandybuck, everyone assumed that the steely young Hobbit-maid would drum some sense into the notoriously eccentric and wild Brandybuck, and ensure that he found a business or craft to occupy his days. However, Agatha was a Took, and there is a latent streak of adventure and wanderlust in that family.

None of the three Hobbit gentlemen could quite remember how it came to pass – again, a good deal of wine was involved – but a curious plan was formed. Since the successful Quest of Erebor and the defeat of the Dragon, a new era of peace and prosperity had fallen on the North. There was much more traffic on the Forest Road than before, thanks to the watchful eyes of the Beorning-folk and the revived Kingdom of Dale. These travellers and merchants would need somewhere to stay along the road. The plan was that the two brothers would build, open and run an inn on the road between the Old Ford and the Forest Gate – quite close to Beorn's Hall, where no evil thing dared go.

Bilbo gave the two brothers some money to start the inn, as well as several letters of introduction to various dignitaries and persons of importance he met on his travels. The two brothers set off from Buckland a few weeks later, still slightly dazed. They crossed the Misty Mountains without incident, and presented themselves at Beorn's house. Beorn ignored the letter of introduction, but was amused by the Hobbits' presumptuousness (the barrel of beer carried from the Golden Perch also helped matters), and gave them leave to build their inn.

A Homely House

The Easterly Inn is situated near a little brook that flows out of Mirkwood towards the Great River, approximately 20 miles south of where the Forest gate opens along the eaves of the wild wood. A small stone bridge arches over the babbling waters, and just beyond that stands the inn. The Easterly Inn (Dindy jokes that it is the eastern-most outpost of the Shire) consists of a small but comfortable wooden inn containing the common room and a few guest rooms for Big Folk, some outbuildings and stables, and the Hobbit-hole beneath where Dindy, Dody, Agatha and Dody's two young sons live.

Although it only opened a few months ago, the inn is gaining a reputation as a good stopping point for journeys east of Mirkwood. The beer is good, the food is excellent, and Hobbits make wonderful hosts (even when their homes are invaded by thirteen dwarves and a Wizard, as Bilbo proved some years previously). In truth, the success of the inn has less to do with Dody's beer or even Agatha's delicious food, and owes more to Beorn's promise of protection and the curiosity of travellers come to see the strange Halflings. Still, if someone comes to shelter from bandits, and stays for the food and the soft feather beds, that is still gold in Dody's pocket.

Indeed, if the inn survives, it may become the heart of a new village, just as Bree sprang up at the crossroads around the Prancing Pony.

Folk of the Inn

Dody Brandybuck: The owner and bartender of the inn, Dody is exceptionally gregarious and friendly, even for a Hobbit. He could talk the hind legs off any creature in Middle-earth; if Dody had ended up in Gollum's cave instead of Bilbo, then he would have lost the Riddle-Game, but the Dwarves would have found Dody by following the noise of a drunken Gollum singing about fish. He is everybody's best friend.

Dindy Brandybuck: Dody's younger and more nervous brother. Unlike his garrulous sibling, Dindy never wanted to travel in the Wild. He always dreamed of opening an inn, but assumed it would be in Buckland or maybe the Eastfarthing, not over the edge of the Wild. Still, if things keep going smoothly, then the Easterly Inn could make the fortune of both Brandybuck brothers, and he could move back to the Shire in a few years with chests of silver and gold, just like Bilbo Baggins.

Last spring, Dindy returned to the Shire to obtain vitally needed supplies, such as handkerchiefs, umbrellas, spice-racks, silverware, barrel-spigots, feather-bolsters and round doors, as well as trade goods like pipe-weed and Shire-beer (which, to be honest, could also be counted as 'vitally needed supplies').

Agatha Brandybuck: Dody's wife, a quiet woman of Tookish blood. She is much more sensible and hard-working than Dody; she lets him keep the customers entertained while she organises the rest of the business. For example, she buys supplies off the Woodmen and the Beornings – and even, rarely, the Elves – and sees to the security of the inn. Underneath her businesslike, bustling demeanour, she's absolutely enchanted to be out here in the Wild meeting all sorts of strange folk.

Her two sons **Dando** and **Rodry** both run wild around the inn and the surrounding countryside. She intends to send them to foster with relatives in the Shire in a few years.

Freir: Freir is a Dwarf tinker-smith who has travelled the roads between the Misty Mountains and the Iron Hills for years. He helped build the inn, and has signed on as their carpenter/blacksmith/farrier/assistant bartender/woodcutter and general axeman in residence. Freir is fond of the Hobbits and fonder still of the money they pay him. After many years of wandering, the Easterly Inn is a good place for him to rest his feet.

Shadrach: A stray dog that was 'adopted' by the Hobbits – or, more accurately, that adopted them. Shadrach is actually one of the wonderful dogs who serve Beorn; Beorn asked the dog to keep an eye on the Hobbits and bark if anything truly dangerous menaced the inn. Shadrach spends his days playing with the Hobbit boys or lazing in front of the fire, but always keeps one ear cocked for danger.

The Adventure Begins

The adventure begins when the company arrive at the Inn. News of the new inn has likely reached them as they travel through the Wild, as wayfarers often share news of good stopping places and shelters. This may be the first time any of them have visited the inn. Hobbit adventurers may know the Brandybuck brothers already (and may have even travelled with them in the past, or even be part of this madcap scheme to open an inn in the Wild). The lights of the Easterly Inn shine with a warm welcoming light in the gloom as the company approaches. It is late summer, but the dusk air has a chill in it that heralds the changing of the seasons. A dog strolls out of the twilight to sniff the characters' hands and see if they are worth barking about.

Inside, the inn is half-full. At one table, there are a trio of Beornings with great tankards of ale and a big plate of Agatha's sausage rolls; these Beornings are hard, fierce men, forged by long years battling for survival in the wild, but Agatha still insists they use napkins. At another table, the innkeeper Dody is talking to some Dwarf travellers. He leaps up and greets the company when they enter.

Poor, Frugal or Martial characters can sleep in the common room; other characters can easily afford a good bed for the night, and there's food and drink for all. Any Hobbit adventurers are offered rooms in the hole beneath the inn. Anyone succeeding at a **Song** roll gets a drink bought for them by the Beornings, who appreciate music.

Rumours at the Inn

A successful roll of **Riddle** or **Courtesy** gets the characters some gossip. The Dwarves just crossed over the mountains from the west, and they bring stories about Goblins. It seems that Orcs are creeping south once more from their fortresses under Mount Gram and Mount Gundabad, and travellers in the High Pass are once again under threat of their attacks. One of the Dwarves speculates that something will have to be done about the matter, and wonders aloud if King Dáin or one of the other rulers of the North will act. The victory won at the Battle of Five Armies should not be thrown away through lack of vigilance. Another, more cynical Dwarf argues that the Misty Mountains are far away from Dale, and that this new era of prosperity and brotherhood will soon wither away and the Free Peoples will once again grow suspicious and insular.

A successful **Insight** roll notices that the innkeeper seems concerned by this news, and while he remains jocular and friendly, he is concealing his worry. In time, Dodinas approaches the company.

Dodinas' Plea

This encounter is weighed in favour of the adventurers, as the innkeeper wants a favour from them. It follows the standard format for Encounters.

Set Tolerance

Dodinas needs doughty warriors to find his brother, so he is looking primarily for Valour. The initial Tolerance is set equal to the highest Valour, increased by one for every Hobbit in the party; additionally, raise the Tolerance by 3 to reflect Dodinas' need for the adventurers' help. Remember to take into account the Standing rating of Hobbit heroes, if any are present.

Evaluating the outcome of the Encounter

The Loremaster can evaluate the outcome of an encounter by keeping track of how many successful rolls the player-heroes achieve during its Introduction and Interaction stages. Every successful roll counts for one, while a great success equates to two successful rolls and an extraordinary result to three successful rolls. This total will be used to gauge what Dodinas will offer the company as a reward (see Interaction below).

Introduction

Once the company is comfortably sitting in the inn, and they have eaten, Dodinas approaches them with a tray of drinks. He carefully selects the drinks from his cellar to appeal to the different adventurers, so Hobbits get a pint of beer from the Shire, Elves are served fine wine, Beornings get mead and so on. He is clearly trying to curry favour. The characters can introduce themselves with either **Awe** or **Courtesy** (TN 12 in either case).

Interaction

Dodinas then inquires about what business might have brought such a company of adventurers to visit his inn. He listens attentively to what the companions have to say about themselves. The Hobbit is preparing for his own speech, the one he will deliver as soon as he thinks he has figured the adventurers out; he will adjust his words depending on how the characters presented themselves: if during the introduction they used **Awe** to recite their deeds and lineages, then he approaches them formally with what amounts to a business proposal; if they used **Courtesy**, then he introduces his request as a favour between friends.

Dody gives the company a brief history of the Easterly Inn. He name-drops shamelessly, referring to Bilbo Baggins as his 'business partner and chief investor'. He explains that his brother Dinodas ('Dindy') went West earlier in the year, and was supposed to return by late summer. Dindy sent word some months ago, saying that he had arrived and was gathering supplies for the long journey east. Since then, Dody has heard nothing of Dindy.

Dodinas asks the company if they are travelling west, and if so, will they set his mind and ease and look for any signs of his brother. If they seem willing to help him, he offers the companions a reward, a prize proportional to the impression they made on him: compare the number of successful rolls they achieved along the episode (including the Introduction) with the entries given below.

0-1: Dodinas needs the adventurers, but he fears he is wasting his money on them: he offers a small purse of coin, enough to qualify as 1 point of Treasure.

2-3: The Hobbit adds some family silverware to the recompense, bringing the reward up to a full point of Treasure for each companion.

4-6: Apply the results of 2-3 above; moreover, Dodinas trusts the company and adds free lodgings for all companions and their direct relatives at the Easterly Inn for the winter. He also promises that he will consider their future employment as caravan guards.

7 or more: Dody is impressed. Apply the results of 4-6 above; additionally, Dodinas gives them the letters of introduction written by Bilbo (see box).

Letters of Introduction

Bilbo wrote several letters for the Brandybuck brothers before they left the Shire. These are very impressive legal-looking documents, sealed with red wax on fine paper and written in Bilbo's best handwriting. The letters start off with lengthy greetings to the recipient, reminding them of their past associations with Mr. Baggins, and then ask that the recipient 'give aid, shelter, hospitality, assistance, friendship, trust and all manner of like good favour to the bearer of this missive'. Four such letters remain in Dody's keeping – one addressed to King Dáin, one to the Master of Lake-town, one to King Bard, and the last addressed to 'Gandalf the Wizard, also called the Grey Wanderer, of No Fixed Abode But Usually Where There's Trouble, Middle-earth'. The other letters (to Elrond, Beorn and the Lord of the Eagles) were already used or lost along the way.

The bearer of such a letter may use it to either gain 2 points of temporary Standing when dealing with the letter's recipient, or reduce the target number of all Courtesy and Persuade rolls during a single Encounter by two levels. Each letter can only be used once.

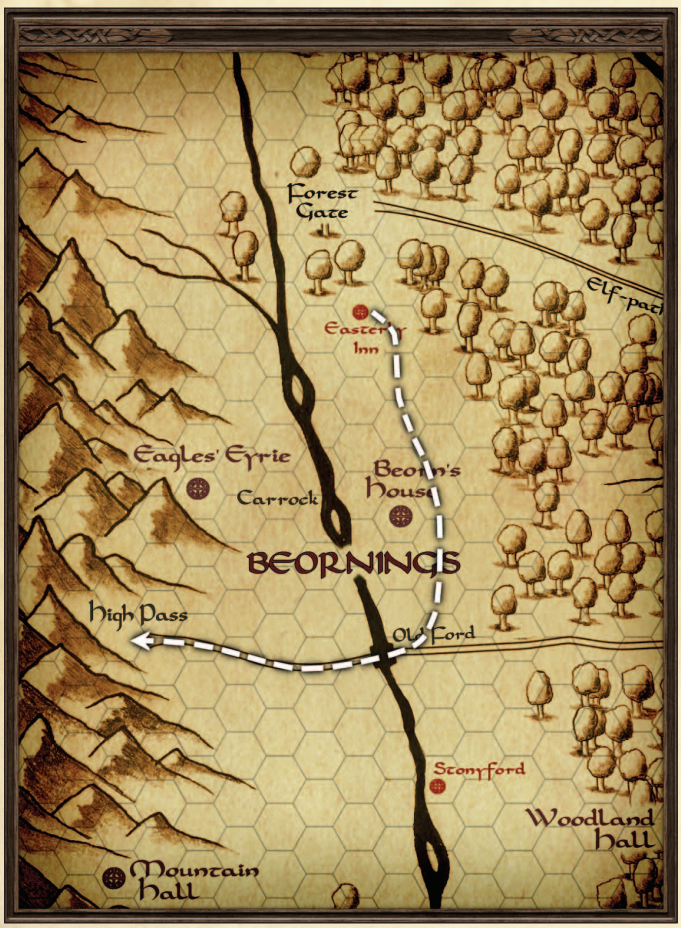
If asked, Dody shows the company the letter he received from his brother earlier in the year. In it, Dindy describes how he has arrived in a village called Bree and started to gather supplies and guards for his journey. Based on the date, Dindy should have arrived at the Easterly Inn if he set off within a month of writing the letter as he intended to do; adventurers know that journeys rarely go smoothly, and that Dindy may have suffered unexpected but quite ordinary delays. Still, if he does not arrive within the next few weeks, then something

may indeed have happened to him. It is dangerous to go travelling in the Wild when the autumn wind blows, and even more so when winter comes.

According to the letter, Dindy should be travelling with half-a-dozen Men.

- Part Two -
Searching the High Pass

If the companions agree to look for Dindy, then Freir the Dwarf suggests they set out by heading south to the Old Ford, and then march due west to the High Pass.



The Journey

The first leg of the journey covers 90 miles south to the Old Ford, but the going is easy as the company marches through the grassy plains and gentle countryside of the Beornings. Alternatively, they can travel west and take boats down the Great River; boats can be obtained from the Beornings, but doing so is expensive (requiring a Standard of Living of at least Martial, see page 160 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*) and requires a successful **Courtesy** roll.

After the long trek south, the company must cross the river and travel another 70 miles or so west along the road. As usual, players may make a preliminary skill roll (a **Lore** test at TN 14) to determine their preparedness and familiarity with the route (see *Preliminary Rolls*, on page 151 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*).

- Based on the journey rules, the distance between the Easterly Inn and the Old Ford requires five days and one Fatigue test from each player, both in summer or autumn.

- The trek from the Old Ford to the High Pass takes two days to complete, and another Fatigue test from each player, both in summer or autumn.

From The Easterly Inn to The Old Ford

The first few days of the journey are pleasant and easy. An unexpected last gasp of summer brings a series of warm days, and the path leads through the rushes and meadows of the river's flood plain. When the companions come upon the Old Forest Road, they will know it is time to turn west towards the distant grey haze of the Misty Mountains.

Hazards Suggestions

The company is travelling through lands protected by Beorn, so there is no risk of attack, and getting lost is impossible as all they need to do is follow the river. But the Wild is always the Wild, even in the land of the Shapeshifter, and the Loremaster may use the following ideas to enliven the journey.

Summer Storms (Scout - Wrong Choices)

Early during the journey, the companions misread the weather, and they are caught in a torrential summer

downpour. If the company's scouts cannot find shelter with a successful **Explore** roll, then the TN for the next Fatigue test is increased by one level.

The Bee-Field (All Companions)
The company passes one of Beorn's flower-strewn meadows filled with honey-bees. A companion could try to steal some of Beorn's honey; this requires a **Stealth** roll, and if successful reduces the TN for the Fatigue test at the end of the journey by one level. If the companion fails, then the company must flee a swarm of angry bees. Doing so requires an **Athletics** test. If a companion fails to outrun the bees, he increases his Fatigue score by one point.

Beornings (Guide - Fatigue)
The company passes through a community of Beorn's followers. A successful **Courtesy** roll from the guide lets the company stay the night in a hay-loft; failing to express common courtesy means the company finds no welcome and must sleep in the open. The companions sleep miserably and are not considered to rest properly adding Fatigue again (twice if the roll was failed with a roll of an ᛟ).

Eager Feet (All Companions - Dangerous Meeting)
The company passes a pair of Woodman trappers, who stop and ask if the companions have heard of a new Inn in these parts, said to be run by 'wise children'. A successful **Insight** roll suggests that the trappers intend to rob the inn, and the companions can confirm this by sneaking after the trappers with **Stealth** and listening to their conversation at the campfire. Challenging the trappers dissuades them from their planned larceny, while killing them outright to prevent their crime without trying to discourage them is a despicable act and qualifies as a *misdeed* worthy of at least 3 points of Shadow (see Misdeeds at page 224 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*).

Upon Reaching the Old Ford
The crossings of the Old Ford are kept by Beornings. The company may pass after paying a small toll (they can afford it, unless they are all at a *Frugal* Standard of Living). The Beornings remember the strange Hobbit-folk, but have heard no word of the caravan.

From The Old Ford to The High Pass
After crossing the river, the travel becomes harder in places. The route passes through several marshy sections, and the companions can see that the road – such as it is – is supported by piled stones. In some places, though, the old road has succumbed to the bog and the company must follow a newer, more winding path that navigates around muddy pools and bog land. Sometimes they come upon lines of stones or even walls that mark some ancient border. The Beornings keep the road in repair as best they can, but they cannot build as well as Men once did.

A Stranger on the Road
When making camp for the night, the travellers are approached by a ragged figure, a battle-hardened old traveller with rotten teeth and a pock-marked face. Without so much as a by-your-leave, he sits down by the fire, pulls off his old boots and sticks his stinking, rotten feet out. If the companions question him, he introduces himself sullenly as 'Shanker'. He is a wanderer and petty-adventurer, more interested in robbing tombs or stealing from isolated farms than in heroic deeds. The companions can convince him to leave by threatening him with weapons in hand, or with a successful **Awe** roll.

If they leave Shanker stay by the fire, though, he produces a clay pipe and a bag of excellent pipe-weed. Any Hobbit or companion with the **Smoking** trait recognises it as Longbottom Leaf from the Shire. Shanker tells the characters that he bought it a few days ago from a caravan up in the mountains. The caravan was led by one of the 'little folk' who sold him the pipe-weed. Shanker then laughs cruelly – the fools did not know that the Goblins had come back to the High Pass. If that caravan makes it down the hills intact, it will be a miracle.

This tale brings the company both hope and fear – Dindy's caravan is only a day or two ahead at most, but there are indeed Goblins nearby,

The Mountain Ruins

After their long journey, the company arrives in a region marked by ancient walls and ruined arches. Most of these walls fell long ago and there are hardly more than two or three stones still piled on each other, but it is clear from marks in the ground and the old lines of the path that a town once stood here.

A successful **Lore** roll or the use of a suitable trait lets a companion guess that these are the ruins of some Mannish town, built earlier in the Third Age. Those cities lasted only a brief span of years – the Necromancer's reach grew long, and tore them down, and the Woodmen returned to the wild.

The road leads to what must have once been a wide square in the heart of the town; from the marks of fire-pits, other travellers have made camp here in the past, and there is a mountain-brook nearby to provide water. It looks like a good camp-site, but a successful **Awareness** roll gives the character an eerie feeling about this place, as if evil lingers here still. If the company want to find a better resting place, their scouts need to make a successful **Explore** roll to find another campsite. Otherwise, they must stay here.

The Night-Wight

The companions were right to be wary. A horror haunts these ruins, a Night-Wight. If the company lie down to sleep in the ruined square, then they are in danger. In the middle of the night, the Night-Wight creeps out from its lair and sneaks up on the adventurers.

The company's Look-out Men must make **Awareness** tests; the Target Number for this roll is determined using the table on 168 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*, and ranges between TN 14 and TN 18 depending on how wary the characters are. If the roll fails, then the Night-Wight automatically places one of the company in an enchanted slumber and carries him off to its lair. The Look-out men must then make more **Awareness** tests, dropping the TN by 2 each time. For each failed check, another member of the company is taken by the Wight.

Once a Look-out Man spots the Night-Wight (or if the Look-out Man is the only member of the company left!) then he realises that some of his companions are missing, and battle is joined.

Fighting the Night-Wight

The Night-Wight is hard to hit and harder to find. Clever companions will use burning brands to daunt the creature.

Based on its special abilities, the Night-Wight loses 1 point of Hate at the end of the first round of combat for each companion wielding a torch *(Fear of Fire)* but still profits from its enhanced power at night *(Denizen of the Dark)*. When reduced to 0 Hate, the Night-Wight flies away into the night shrieking in frustration *(Craven)*.

The Wight's Prisoners

Those kidnapped by the Wight are dragged away to the brook nearby. There, the wight submerges them in the muddy banks of the river, pushing them into boggy graves so that only the victims' faces remain at the surface. They are entombed alive in the clinging mud.

Once battle is joined with the Wight, the victims may make a Valour test every round to awaken (starting at TN 16, and dropping by 2 each round of battle). Once awake, escaping from the mud needs a successful **Athletics** test. A hero who was buried in the mud is considered to be temporarily Weary, until he is able to wash away the clinging dirt.

After the Battle

If the company defeat the Night-Wight, then the next morning they can search for its treasure. A successful **Search** roll lets the company find the ancient remains of a warrior buried in the bog. Little remains save bones and rags, but there are a few gemstones in what must have once been a fine neck-torc: these gemstones are worth a point of Treasure apiece.

Night-Wight

"A shadow came out of dark places far away..."

The Night-Wight is a thing of shadow, haunting the remains of a warrior who once fell into corruption. It attacks using a wicked spear with a barbed head, and will resort to using its claws if disarmed.

Night-Wight:

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
54*	8
Parry	Armour
7	4d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 1
Movement, 3	Custom, 2
Perception, 2	Vocation, 3
Weapon Skills	
Spear	3
Strangling Claws	2
Special Abilities	
Fear of Fire	Denizen of the Dark
Fell Speed	Craven

**The* Night-Wight's *very high Endurance and Armour scores reflect the thing's resilience to harm inflicted by corporeal weapons.*

Weapons:

Weapon Type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Sharp Spear	5	9	14	Pierce
Strangling Claws	Attribute Level		16	-

Searching For The Caravan

After passing through the ruins of the town, the company enter the foothills of the Misty Mountains. The caravan should be nearby. Call for **Hunting** rolls as the day progresses; if successful, the companions find Goblin-tracks, and later they encounter a pony that has obviously escaped its harness and fled in terror. The pony has a Goblin-arrow sticking out of its hind-quarters. A successful **Healing** roll lets a companion remove the arrow, which fortunately is not poisoned and did not inflict any permanent injury on the poor terrified creature.

As twilight comes closer, the company spot a big bonfire on a nearby hilltop – they have found the caravan, and just in the nick of time! Dindy and his guards have taken refuge in an old ringfort on the hilltop, and the Goblins are coming...

- Part Three - Battle at the Ringfort

The company has only a few minutes to make it to the ringfort and meet with the members of the caravan before battle is joined, so they had best make those minutes count!

The Ringfort

'Fort' is too grand a term – this old fortification consists of a ring-shaped earthen bank around the hilltop. There was once a small settlement here, possibly a watch on the pass or a shepherds' cabin, but it has long since vanished leaving only a few stones as traces. The earthen bank is still in moderately good condition, and will give the characters an advantage when it comes to defence. There are only two easy approaches up to the ringfort, so the Goblins will have to come up those mountain paths, and as long as the company defends these approaches, they stand a good chance of holding the fort against the enemy.

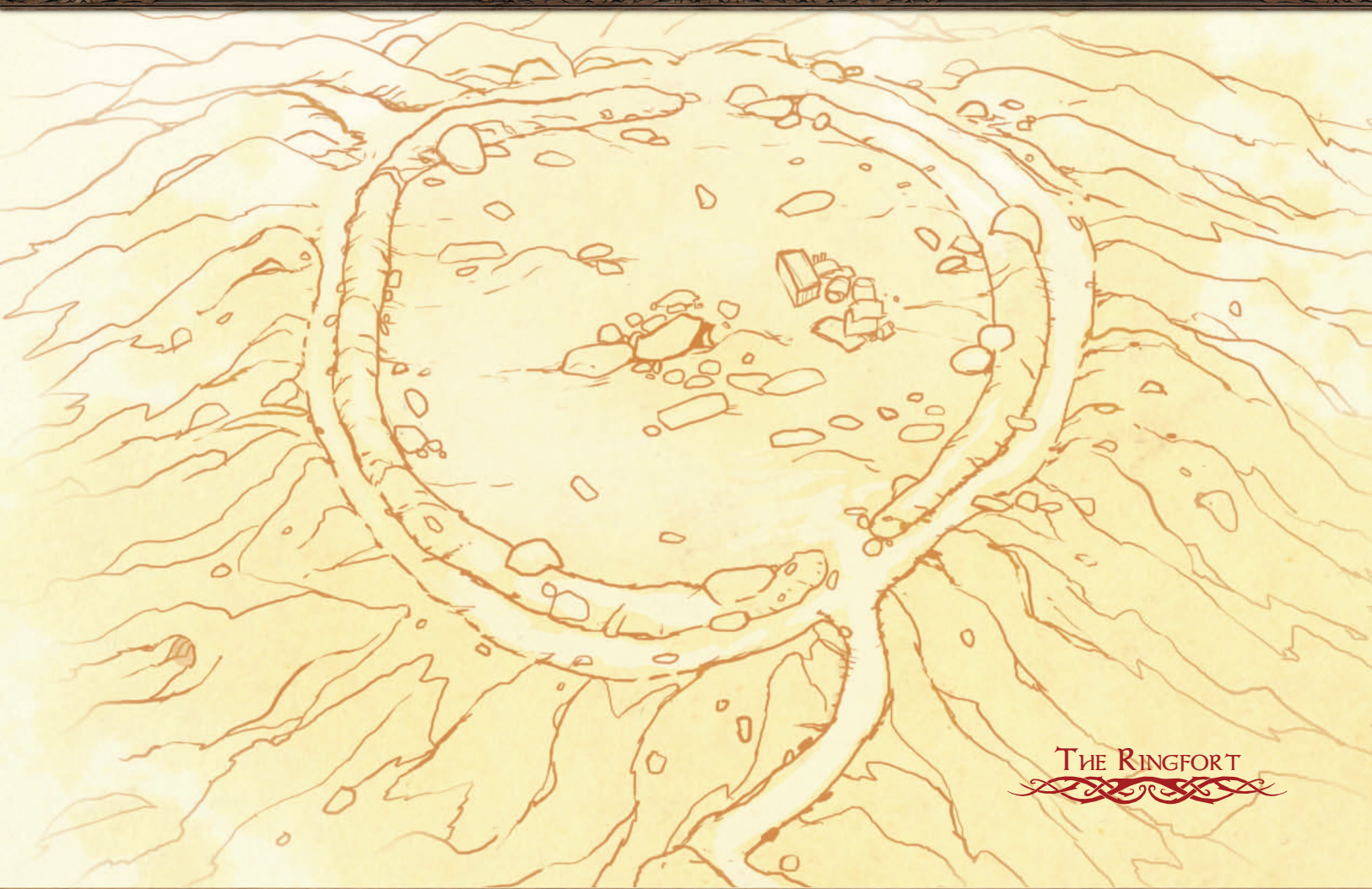
- When the companions roll **Battle** to determine Combat Advantages at the start of the battle, they may add their Attribute bonus (Heart) for free without needing to spend Hope.

A successful **Search** roll uncovers an old souterrain (an underground passage) that runs from the middle of the ringfort to a spot outside the walls. The passage is choked with roots and dirt, but a companion could wriggle through with a successful **Stealth** roll or invoking a Trait like Small. The passage is of no use as an escape route in this situation, as the Goblins see better in the dark and would chase any would-be escapees on the hillside, but the discovery of the passageway is important nonetheless. Firstly, the Goblins might try to creep up the passageway and attack from the defenders' rear, so the adventurer may wish to block the entrance with heavy stones. Alternatively, a brave adventurer could use the passageway to sneak out of the ringfort when battle is joined, and attack the Goblins from behind

The Caravan

There are five travellers in the ringfort. There is no time for proper introductions, so the caravan leader (Iwgar) hastily greets the company and explains the situation.

The Hobbit Dinodas Brandybuck: Poor Dindy is exhausted and terrified by his ordeal, and even the news that his brother sent the company to find him brings him little relief. He is polite, in the way that only a desperate, terrified Hobbit can be. *("I'm most grateful that you could stop in for tea! Very grateful indeed! But as we've got some uninvited guests coming, I do hope you'll excuse me while I hide under these boxes!")* It is clear that Dindy will be of little use in the coming battle, so Iwgar has ordered him to keep the fire in the middle of the ringfort blazing.



The Ringfort

Iwgar Longleg: The caravan leader and guide, Iwgar is a Beorning who travelled west. He is cursed with a great wanderlust, and has even gone to see the Sea. He wears a cockle-shell in his hat. He led the caravan over the mountains, and is the best warrior and guide in the party. Unfortunately, a poisoned Goblin-arrow caught him in the flank last night, and he is clearly suffering from it. Unless the company comprises a hero able to prepare a poison antidote, Iwgar begins the battle as if Wounded.

Andy Blackthorn, Bill the Bowman, Tom Lumpyface: Three young men from Bree-land, in the West, hired to protect the caravan. None are experienced warriors, and they are all harrowed by the Goblin attack. They have all sustained some cuts and injuries, and are clearly very tired, but they can still fight.

Their Tale

Dinodas and his travelling companions were late leaving Bree. There are always delays when travelling, especially with a heavy load. They journeyed across the land towards the mountains without incident, and climbed up the slopes to the High Pass. As far as they knew, the mountains were still mostly free of Goblins, so they did not hasten, but instead took the easiest route through the pass.

Two nights ago, Iwgar spotted a Goblin spying on them. Since then, they have been beset by Goblin attacks. The worst came last night. They managed to beat the creatures back, but lost their ponies and most of their supplies and trade goods. Fearing that they would not make it to safety if they stayed on the road, Iwgar headed to this easily-defended ringfort to fight.

Their Plight

Now the travellers – and the companions – all face the same danger. This fort is the most defensible spot in the hills around here, and if they can hold it all night, then they can make their escape down the mountainside the next morning in the bright light of day. There are more Beorning warriors in the foothills, and the goblins will not dare pursue the caravan any farther east. The numbers of Goblins have increased each night since the first encounter – one on the first night, many more on the second, and Iwgar expects a whole host of them tonight. Already, in the gathering gloom, the companions can see shapes skulking out there.

Tactics

Iwgar's plan is simple: to keep the fire in the middle of the ringfort burning, and to hold off the attackers for as long possible. The Goblins will mostly approach by the two easy paths up the hillside – Iwgar intended to split his forces between these two points, but now that the companions are here, they can take one side of the fort and he and the Breelanders will guard the other.

A successful **Battle** roll confirms that this is a good plan, although the Goblins will probably send lightly armoured skirmishers around the side, and that it would be wise to dedicate one or two warriors to dealing with these attackers. It also suggests that making a run for it would be suicidal.

The Enemy

From their vantage point on the ringfort walls, the companions can see Goblin-shapes sneaking through the dusk and hear the howling of wolves. A **Hunting** roll or possession of a Trait like *Keen-eyed* lets the companions track individual figures and get a rough count. There are lots of Goblins out there, mostly smaller scouts (Goblin Archers), but a few bigger brutes (Orc Soldiers) and Wolves.

- There are at least five Goblin Archers and one Orc Soldier for every companion, plus their leader Ubhurz.

- During the battle, keep track of the number of Orcs slain – as soon as the last Orc is defeated, the Goblins flee.

The Challenge

Before battle is joined, the enemy leader – a big Orc – shouts a threat to the defenders of the ringfort.

> *"Rragh! Trapped in your little circle like rats in a grave! I am Ubhurz, and I am here to kill you – but if you throw out your swords and spears, and give up, then maybe Ubhurz will let some of you go!"*

One of the Breelanders, young Andy Blackthorn, moves to throw his sword over the wall and surrender. The adventurers may deal with this as they wish; they might

use **Inspire** to rally Andy's spirit, or issue a counter-threat to Ubhurz with **Awe** – or just decide the time for talking is over, and fire an arrow at the Orc!

The Goblin Tactics

The Goblins' plan of attack is a simple one – send a wave of sword-fodder to swarm the defenders and drive them back from the wall, and then the big Orcs follow up behind them.

If the company has not discovered the secret souterrain, then the Goblins find the outer entrance as they advance up the hill. The Goblins then sent four of their number through the passage, to attack the company from behind at the worst possible moment (or, alternatively, they kidnap Dinodas via the passage – see *The Kidnapping*, page 34).

Battle!

With a roar of vile battle-cries and a hail of Goblin-arrows, battle is joined. The first wave of attackers consists of knife-wielding Goblins who come swarming up the path and over the walls. The Orcs march up the paths behind the Goblins. While the company defends one entrance to the ringfort, Iwgar and the Breelanders defend the other.

- Two Goblin Archers for every companion leave their bows to attack their side in the first wave, jagged knife in hand. Three rounds later, they are joined by one Orc Soldier and another Goblin Archer with knife for every companion.
- The battle is run using the normal rules for combat, with the following addition: at the start of each round, after the companions have their combat stance, roll the Feat die and consult the Allies in Battle table below to determine how well the other side of the ringfort fares.

For example, in the first round of battle, the Loremaster rolls ᚠ on the Allies in Battle table. It's the best possible result for the company. The Loremaster describes how one of the big Orcs shoulders the Goblins aside and throws himself over the ramparts, howling for blood – and how Iwgar steps forward and calmly impales the Orc on a longspear!

The following round the Loremaster rolls a 3. This means that a Goblin slips past the allies on the far side and is free to roam around the inside of the ringfort. The Goblin sees Caranthir in rearward stance and attacks the Elf.

If there had only been three allies, and not four, then this roll would instead be equal to the number of allies, so the Loremaster would have instead noted that one of the allies was Wounded instead, and described how a Goblin slipped under Tom's shield and stabbed the Breelander in the stomach.

Allies in Battle:

	One of the allies is slain. If all four allies are slain, then the attackers swarm the ringfort and the company loses the benefit of the defensive ramparts.
1, 2, 3 or 4	The allies are hard-pressed to hold the enemy back. If the number rolled is greater than or equal to the number of surviving allies, then one of the allies is wounded – or, if an ally is already wounded, then one of them is slain. If all four allies are slain, then the attackers swarm the ringfort and the company loses the benefit of the defensive ramparts (all unused bonus dice due to Combat Advantages are lost). If the number rolled is lower than the number of allies, then a Goblin slips past them and attacks any defender currently in a Rearward stance. If no companion is fighting in Rearward, then ignore the result.
5, 6, 7	The allies hold their line and keep fighting.
8, 9 or 10	The allies fight bravely, pushing the enemy back. Black Goblin blood spills across the stones. If this result is rolled twice in a row, then the allies slay one of the Orcs!
ᚠ	A cheer goes up as one of the Orcs goes down! One of the allies caught an Orc with a savage blow, cutting the brute's head clean off!

Battle Events

The Loremaster should apply the following battle events at appropriate moments.

A Rain of Arrows

Goblins outside the ring fort keep firing arrows over the banks. These attacks are not aimed at any particular target; they are firing to keep the defenders off balance.

- Any companion who rolls may be struck by an arrow instead of triggering an enemy Called Shot. The arrow is considered to automatically hit, inflicting 4 damage. These poorly-aimed arrows cannot Wound.

The Wolves Beyond The Walls

The howling wolves do not participate in the battle unless one of the company slips out via the secret passage.

Goblin Skirmishers

If the company have not secured the secret passage, or if the Loremaster wishes to make the fight harder, then a few Goblins manage to climb over the steeper sides of the hill and climb over the banks. These attackers swarm in and attack the companions from behind, or else cause other problems like kicking over the bonfire and plunging the ringfort into darkness. There are two Goblin Archers for every companion.

Dread Ubhurz

The last Orc to join the fray is dread Ubhurz himself, the Orc captain. He too scales the side walls like the Goblin skirmishers, then charges into the rear of the company wielding his mighty two-handed scimitar. Ubhurz is a huge Orc of the Misty Mountains, an infamous hunter and mercenary. Unlike the other Goblins in this host, he does not make his lair in the caves nearby – he travels the mountains in search of blood and gold. Ubhurz is an Orc Guard (page 240 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*).

Victory!

If Dread Ubhurz is defeated, then all the Orcs have been slain; the remaining Goblins – if any – flee the hilltop in terror.

The Kidnapping

As the Goblins go shrieking into the night, and the survivors bind their wounds, the company hears a muffled cry of alarm. A pair of Goblin stragglers crept into the ringfort and grabbed Dinodas Brandybuck! The unfortunate Hobbit is half-way down the mountainside before the companions notice he is gone.

The company can chase the Goblins, but before they reach Dinodas, the Goblins duck into a cave mouth and vanish into the tunnels.

Averting the Kidnapping

Some Loremasters prefer to let everything be ruled by the whims of the dice, and always give the players a chance to stop their foes from acting. The advantage of this approach is that the players never feel like their fate is out of their hands; the downside is that if the players are quick and lucky, they can rescue Dinodas before the Goblins get underground.

If you favour this approach, then the players might use a Trait as per the rules for Unforeseen Actions on page 93 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*. Traits like *Wary*, *Quick of Hearing* or *Keen-Sighted* might let a companion spot the Goblins Grabbing the poor Hobbit, while *Swift* might let an adventurer sprint down the hillside and try to reach the kidnapped before they enter the cave. If the companions do thwart the kidnapping, skip Parts Four and Five and move right on to Part Six!

- Part Four - Into The Mountains

After the fight, Iwgar and the Breelanders are all too badly injured and exhausted to pursue Dinodas. They beg the company to rescue the Hobbit. If the company did not see Dinodas's abduction, a successful **Search** or **Hunting** roll or an appropriate Trait might let a hero find Goblin tracks going into a nearby cave. Iwgar knows these mountains are riddled with tunnels and caves. He suspects that the Goblins are heading for one of their underground halls with the loot they stole from the caravan the night before. He doubts the Goblins will return to the surface tonight, not after the bloody nose they got in the Battle of the Ringfort, but unless the companions rescue Dinodas immediately, the poor Hobbit will doubtless perish.

The Tunnels

There's nothing to do except follow the Goblins underground. At the back of the cave is a narrow, noisome passage that winds steeply down into the rock. Rivulets of icy-cold water make every footstep treacherous, and the whole place smells of bat. Climbing down the passage leads down to a tunnel that slopes more gently downwards and heads west towards the roots of the mountains – although working out that they are facing West requires a successful **Explore** roll.

It would be very, very easy to get lost down here, but in the distance, the companions can hear grotesque singing echoing up the tunnel. The Goblins are marching back through the tunnels to their Goblin-hall, and they are singing as they go.

The Goblin Song:

Goblins live down in the caves,
Ain't had nothing to eat for days!
Empty bellies, sharpened teeth,
Sharp blades in a blackened sheath!

Goblins are a courteous folk
Always polite and real well spoke!
After a fight when we're the winner
Bring the foe back home for dinner!

Dwarves is tough and mostly beard.
Elves are stringy and taste weird.
In better times we eat Man-flesh
Smoke it, cook it or eat it fresh!

Put the Hobbit in the pot!
Eat him up, we'll have the lot!
Bring him to the Goblin feast!
Bring him to the Goblin feast!

Journeys in the Dark

Travelling underground can be more or less dangerous than a journey on the surface, depending on where you are. When passing through Moria, for example, the Fellowship travelled 40 miles underground between the evening of the 13th of January and the afternoon of the 15th – and that included their stop by Balin's tomb, Gandalf taking some time to decide which way to go, and the battle with the Balrog! However, Moria was in its day a great thoroughfare between West and East, and travelling though it was comparatively easy in terms of terrain. The Dwarrowdelf is full of long straight passages and staircases. Adventurers in Moria can travel quickly – the problem, of course, is not getting lost!

By contrast, natural caves are extremely difficult terrain. With no light, no sure footing, many opportunities to get lost and lots of narrow passages to squeeze through, a company would be lucky to travel more than a few miles for every arduous day they spent underground.

Darkness and Light

Having a good source of light is vitally important when travelling underground. A companion caught in the pitch darkness is at a great disadvantage.

- Any *Perception, Movement* or *Survival*-based rolls are made at two levels higher difficulty (one level if the hero is a Dwarf with the *Durin's Way* virtue, or possesses the *Tunnelling* Trait). The adventurers' combat capabilities are also penalised: all fighters are considered to be severely hindered when attacking and defending (see *Complications* at page 181 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*).

Luckily, Iwgar can supply the company with burning torches. There are two torches for every hero, but they do not last indefinitely, and can be extinguished accidentally:

- Whenever a player gets an result in any roll, one torch goes out and cannot be lit again.

The Journey Through the Tunnels

The Goblin hall is only a few miles away, but it still takes the company the better part of a day to make their way through the tunnels.

- First, the company's Scouts must pass an **Explore** (or **Hunting**) test to follow the Goblins. If failed, then the company is lost for a day in the lightless tunnels.

Next, all companions must make a Fatigue test at TN 20 as they trudge through the echoing passage. As they are travelling in Shadow Lands, everyone also has to make a Corruption test at TN 18 to avoid gaining a Shadow Point.

- If one or more companions failed at the Fatigue test producing an EYE icon, one or more Hazard episodes must be resolved, as per the normal journey rules.

Hazards Suggestions

Here are some examples of Hazard episodes featuring typical underground threats:

Getting Stuck (Guide)

The tunnel gets narrower, and narrower, and narrower as it branches off several times. In places, the companions have to crawl or squeeze through little gaps. The guide must make a **Travel** roll to pick the right tunnel branch. If he fails, then the companion with the highest Encumbrance (or someone with a trait like *Tall*) gets stuck and becomes temporarily Weary freeing himself (the weariness lasts until properly rested).

Falling Rocks (Scout)

The Scout must open a blocked passage making an **Explore** roll. If he fails, he accidentally triggers a small rock-fall and everyone in the company is pelted with stones, losing 3 Endurance points. Worse, if the roll produced an result, the unfortunate scout is buried alive and must be dug out by his companions: digging out the scout is a prolonged action requiring three **Athletics** tests.

Cave Spiders (Huntsman)

The company passes into a section of caves where huge Cave spiders lurk. The company Huntsman may make

a **Hunting** test to recognise signs of the impending danger; if he fails, then the company blunders into spider-webs and are caught. The Cave spiders are similar to the Attercops of Mirkwood (page 242 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*), but have the *Great Leap* special ability in place of *Denizen of the Dark*. There is one spider for every companion. Being caught in a web counts as being *moderately hindered* as both defender and attacker (see page 181 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*).

Wandering Troll (Look-Out)

The Look-out hears something huge moving through the tunnel ahead. A Cave-troll is coming this way, blindly snuffling as it shambles through the mountain. The company can fight the monster, or – much wiser – they can hide if the Look-out man gave them enough warning. First, the Look-out makes an **Awareness** test (TN 12), then everyone in the party must make **Stealth** tests to hide. The TN for the **Stealth** tests is 10 if the company have adequate warning, and 14 if they do not. If anyone fails the **Stealth** test, the Troll spots them.

Tap-Tap-Tap (all Companions)

Ranging ahead in the darkness, the company hear a noise echoing through the rock from far away and far below. Tap-tap-tap, it says, tap-tap-tap. The noise is unsettling, and everyone must make an immediate Valour test (TN 12) to avoid losing a point of Hope.

Treacherous Footing (any Companion)

The tunnel opens up into a chasm. A raging underground river plunges into this pit, falling into the uttermost deeps of the world. The tunnel continues on the far side of the chasm, and a narrow ledge runs along the opposite wall of the chasm to the waterfall. The company can – if they dare – clamber along this water-slick ledge to continue their journey. A wise guide will advise the travellers to rope themselves together, and then have the most agile companion make the first crossing. The first crossing requires passing an **Athletics** test. Failure means the adventurer falls into the depths and perishes, unless he is roped to other companions (if a hero is lost this way, then all his companions must pass a Corruption test or gain 1 Shadow point for the distressful experience – see *Anguish* at page 222 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*).

Goblin Sentinels

At the end of their journey, the companions arrive at a network of caves where the Goblins have clearly made themselves at home – judging by the raucous singing and the smell, there are lots of Orcs up ahead! The map on page 38 shows the layout of the caves. Watching the cave entrance (map key n. 1) is a pair of Orc Soldiers (page 240 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*). The Orcs have a bottle of fine wine from the vineyards of the Southfarthing that was stolen from Dindy's caravan and are passing it back and forth between them and singing a filthy song about dancing bears. The companions need to deal with the Orcs without raising the alarm.

- **Ambushing the Sentinels.** The guards are drunk, so it is easy to take them by surprise. The Target Number for **Battle** tests is 12, reflecting the goblins' inattention. The Orcs try to sound the alarm immediately instead of fighting, so the adventurers need to knock the guards out before they can act.

- **Tricking the Sentinels.** A clever adventurer can exploit the guards' drunkenness, either by disguising the party as an Orc patrol with **Stealth**, or by convincing them to fight each other with a good **Riddle** or **Persuade** roll.

- **Sneaking Past.** These guards are not very attentive, and can be avoided with a **Stealth** roll at TN 12.

Alarums!

If a Goblin shouts out a warning, then the alarm is raised. If the Goblins do sound the alarm, then the rest of the tribe come staggering out of the feast. The Goblins are drunk and merry, and armed with dinner forks and steak-knives instead of bows and spears, but that does not make them any less dangerous. Quite the contrary, in fact! The Goblins are hungry, and will try to eat the companions alive!

There are countless Goblins in the feast-hall, so standing and fighting is not an option. The company might be able to carve their way through the crowd to the chief, kill him, steal the key, and then escape, but they will be hard pressed to do so. Stealth and burglary are by far the better options here.

- Part 5 -
Prisoner of the Goblins

The first turning after the guard post brings the companions to Dinodas's prison (map key n. 2). As jail cells under the mountain go, it is a very comfortable one. The Goblins have stacked most of the provisions stolen from the caravan in this room, which also serves as the Goblins' kitchen and larder. There is a roaring fire with a spit and a stove on it, lots of stolen pots and pans, a spice-rack, roasting-tins and egg-timers, knives and forks and skewers and spoons and all the rest of the kitchen implements that were supposed to end up at the Easterly Inn. Meat sizzles and roasts in a dozen different ways.

In the middle of it all sits a very miserable Dinodas, busily chopping potatoes. Even the arrival of the companions to rescue him does not lift his spirits. "*It's very kind of you to try to rescue me,*" he says, "*but I fear it's quite impossible. Look!*" He holds up his hairy foot, and the companions see that he is chained to the wall. "The chief Goblin locked me in here. They demand that I cook them a feast... and I think I'm the pudding!"

- **The Chain:** The chain was not forged by Goblins. Any character with a good **Craft** skill, or a Dwarf, can tell this is ancient Mannish work, and the chain is made from forged steel, unbreakable without the proper tools. Picking the lock is equally impossible; the only way to escape the chain is to unlock it, and the chief Goblin has the only key.

(If the companions suggest to Dinodas that they cut his foot off, he faints on the spot, and can only be revived with a strong cup of tea, a sit down and a successful **Healing** roll).

Cooking Time!

As the characters are speaking to Dinodas, a Goblin voice roars up the tunnel, *"Where's our dinner? 'Urry up, we're starvin'!"* If the companions are to avoid raising the alarm, they need to prepare a feast for the Goblins. Dinodas can do most of the work, but anyone with *Cooking* can help out and keep the Goblins from noticing the intruders.

The Goblin Hall

1. Guard Posts: There are two guards standing watch at each of these posts, just like the two the company passed on the way in. Most of the other guards are not quite as sloshed as the first two, though!

2. The Larder: Where poor Dinodas is chained. The small alcoves along the wall contain the gnawed remains of some other prisoners.

3. Wine Cellar: Where the beer and wine from the caravan is stored.

4. Feast-Hall: The main chamber. See The Feast, below.

5. Goblin-Caves: Small caves where the Goblins live, full of filth and chewed bones and stolen trinkets. Most of the Goblins are in the feast-hall.

6. Smithy: Where the Goblins forge their knives and arrow-heads.

7. Goblin Chief's Chamber: The Goblin chief resides here, and here is where he keeps the best of his loot. There is a four-poster bed covered in sheep-hides, a fine shield stolen from some dead mountaineer, a Dwarf-made mirror so the chief can admire his toad-like features.

The chamber is guarded by three Orcs, who are more vigilant than the other guards. They are not drunk, but are instead chewing on the thigh-bone of one of the caravan's ponies.

8. Goblin Treasure Hoard: A small pile of silver and gold coins, ranging from crudely-made Goblin coins to ingots of Dwarven silver, as well as a few other ill-gotten treasures; as a whole, it is worth 10* points of Treasure.

The Feast

Goblins are naturally wicked creatures. In any situation, they instinctively know the best way to be cruel and hurtful. Mockery and nasty tricks come to them without a moment's thought. So, when they captured a Hobbit, their minds instantly settled on a plan to mock him.

In the feast-hall, the Goblins have erected long trestle tables for their feast. All the Orcs have napkins, wine glasses, fine silverware, and are behaving like Hobbit gentlemen at a dinner (or rather, how Goblins imagine gentle-Hobbits behave). They have looted Dinodas's wardrobe, and some are now wearing torn waist-coasts, burst breeches and even a top-hat (a gift from Dinodas's uncle). At the head of the table, the Goblin Chief sits on his throne, giving self-important speeches and toasting everything from Mount Gundabad to the warts on his toes.

- The key to Dinodas's chains is in the Goblin Chief's pocket. He takes it out and toys with it every few minutes when giving a speech.

More Meat!

As soon as the Goblins devour one course, they want more! Every few minutes, a few of the more sober Goblins stumble down to the larder and pick up whatever dishes Dinodas has cooked. Some of this food even makes it back to the feast-hall. Clever adventurers could intercept the Goblins in small groups as they go in search of more food, thereby fighting the Goblin horde in bite-sized chunks instead of all-at-once.

More Drink!

The caravan was laden down with barrels of beer and bottles of wine from the Shire, and the Goblins are drinking their way through them. They have hacked open some of the barrels and watered the beer down shamefully. Only the Goblin Chief's chosen warriors get the good beer and the wine. If the companions want to trick the Goblins into getting even drunker, they can swap the watered-down beer for full-strength barrels or wine. Drunken Goblins wobble over to the wine cellar for refills every few minutes.

Rescuing Dinodas

To save the Hobbit, the company need to obtain the key from the Goblin Chief, free Dinodas, then escape the way they came. Here are three of the likely methods for obtaining the key; the players may invent other schemes to save the day.

Stealing The Key

Stealing the key is, on its own, an impossible task. The companions need to distract the Goblin Chief. They could get the chief drunk by tampering with his wine-cup, or cook a meal so outrageously heavy that the chief gets sleepy after eating it, and then steal the key from his sleeping chambers. They could cause a distraction, say by starting a fight or demanding that the chief give an after-dinner speech, or disguise one of their number as a Goblin, so he can get close enough to pick-pocket the chief.

- Stealing the key can be set up as a prolonged action, requiring at least 5 successful rolls and allowing for cooperation. Applicable skills depend on the plan devised by the companions, but might reasonably include **Stealth**, **Awareness**, **Insight**, **Craft**, or even **Song** or **Riddle**. See page 149 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game* for details on prolonged actions.

Sabotaging The Feast

An adventurer would never stoop to using poison, and anyway, Goblins happily eat far worse things than poison. The company could sabotage the feast by making the food so rich it puts the Goblins to sleep, or mixing in strong spices to ruin their digestion. They could sow dissent among the Goblins by putting all the meat on one side of a roasted goat, leaving nothing but skin and gristle on the other, and waiting until the Goblins start fighting over the unfair portions. They could break out the strong wine and get all the Goblins drunk, or distract the Goblins by rolling the barrels of wine down the sloping exit tunnel nearby.

Surprise Attack

Militant companions can take advantage of the situation by charging into the middle of the feast and attacking the Goblin Chief.

The company automatically starts with three dice of Combat Advantage (add more dice if the Goblins are blind drunk or quarrelling among themselves), and have at least one full round of attacks before the Goblins fight back.

- Most of the Goblins here are Goblin Archers), with a few Orc Soldiers; there are at least two Archers and one Soldier for every companion. The Goblin Chief himself is an Orc Chieftain (see pages 239-240 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game* for all three types of Goblin).

Escape!

Once the companions have the key, they can free Dinodas and escape the Goblin Hall. The journey back through the caves is much easier, and within a few hours the company emerges back on the hillside in the bright sunlight.

- Epilogue -
Back To The Inn

If they survived, Iwgar and the Breelanders were not idle while they waited. They found the scattered ponies, repaired the carts, and loaded up the supplies that could be salvaged. Once reunited with the company, the whole caravan can depart again. The road lies straight east, and the going is easy. Ten days after rescuing Dindy, the company reaches the Easterly Inn and the warmest welcome east of the mountains.

Dody throws a feast in the company's honour. Dindy is shaken by his ordeal, but a few days of good food and soft beds soon put him right. If the company managed to steal some of the Goblins' treasure, they can spend a few coins at the inn buying food and drink for the Beornings and visiting Dwarves, and so improve their reputation in the local area.

The loss of some of the supplies means that Dindy will have to return to the West next year to purchase replacements. If any of the company wish to travel with him, they can find ready employment as caravan guards or guides. For now, though, the beer is good and the company is merry at the Easterly Inn, a little outpost of the Shire in the Wild!

Fellowship Phase

If the company spend a Fellowship phase completing the *Open New Sanctuary* undertaking at the Easterly Inn, then they may count the inn as a haven in future adventures. However, if they do not, then the inn falls prey to the growing darkness of Wilderland in future years. By 2951, the inn is destroyed by Orcs out of Southern Mirkwood. Outposts like the Easterly Inn exist on a knife's edge in Wilderland, and it is only through the actions of heroes like the companions that they can survive and prosper.

- kinstrife - & dark tidings

- **When:** The company may undertake this quest at any time from the year 2946 onwards.

- **Where:** The adventure begins on the Great River or one of its tributaries, within a short distance of Beorn's Hall. From there, the adventurers travel down the river and search the Beornings' territory for an escaped prisoner.

- **What:** The company finds the bodies of two slain Beornings in a boat on the river. Investigating their deaths brings the company to Beorn's Hall, where Beorn asks them to recapture the prisoner. Travelling to a nearby village, the companions discover that the villain murdered a kinsman and has now fled into the woods, where he has fallen in with evil men from the South.

    - **Why:** Beorn himself asks the adventurers to bring the villain to justice. For a Beorning, capturing the escaped prisoner is a matter of honour.

    - **Who:** The prisoner is a warrior named Oderic, and his crime was one of passion. He accidentally killed his kinsman Rathfic in a quarrel over a woman. Now, Oderic has fled into the woods and joined a band of outlaws, who plan to attack the land of the Beornings. Sorrow is piled on sorrow and tragedy breeds more tragedy as the curse of the kinstrife works its baleful influence.

Adventuring Phase

This adventure is divided into nine parts.

Part One - A Funeral Boat

The company happens upon a boat that has run aground on the banks of the Great River. The corpses of two Beorning men lie within, both pierced by many Orc-arrows. The companions discover that there was a third man in the boat, a prisoner, and that the Beornings were warriors bringing him back for trial.

Part Two - Beorn's Hall

The company travels to Beorn's House and delivers the news. The next morning, Beorn confirms their suspicions and asks them to find this escaped prisoner and bring him to justice. The companions may choose to wait a few hours before beginning the chase in order to pay their respects to the fallen.

Part Three - The Chase

The company travels south for several days, looking for signs of the prisoner.

Part Four - Kinstrife

The trail leads to the village of Stonyford, where the company learns the tale of Oderic's crime and his strange history. They question the witnesses, and learn that Oderic returned to the village a few nights ago, and may still be nearby.

Part Five - The Chase Continued

The hunt brings the companions across the Great River into wilder lands.

Part Six - Ill-Favoured Men

The company finds signs that a band of outlaws is nearby, and learns that Oderic has fallen in with them. By spying on the outlaws, they see that Oderic is guiding the outlaws – but has he turned traitor, or is he being forced to serve them?

Part Seven - The Outlaw Boy

The companions recapture Oderic, either by appealing to his better nature, by trickery, or by force of arms.

Part Eight - Grim Tidings

With Oderic's aid or without it, the company must choose what to do about the outlaw band.

Part Nine - Judgement at the Carrock

The company returns to Beorn's Carrock and the player-heroes speak at Oderic's trial.

- Part One -
A Funeral Boat

While travelling along the Great River in the proximity of Beorn's house, either on the shore or by boat, the company's Look-out spots another boat that has run aground in the thick rushes and weeds on the east side of the stream. Flies buzz around two slumped shapes that lie over the edge of the boat, and a limp arm trails in the water. As the company come closer, they can see the black shafts of arrows sticking out of both corpses and the frame of the boat.

Foreshadowing

You can make the discovery of the boat creepier by describing it in the right way. Talk about carrion-crows circling overhead, or describe how the arm of one of the dead men beats against the hull of the boat as the current buffets it, thumping like the sound of a drum. Maybe the company come upon the boat in the twilight, where the gathering darkness makes everything uncertain and ghostly, or perhaps a character with a Virtue like *Woeful Foresight*, *Night-Goer* or *Natural Watchfulness* sees signs of the Orc-attack before the boat is discovered.

Investigating, they find:

- The boat is a simple wooden one, and the dead men were clearly making their way up the Anduin. They have few supplies left, suggesting they were nearly at their destination (a successful roll of **Riddle** may yield all the above information).

- The two bodies are both those of male Beornings. From their weapons and clothing, they were warriors of good standing and both of them have silver cloak-pins in the shape of a bear's head. Any Beorning, or anyone who passes a **Lore** test, recognises these badges as being of a sort given to men trusted by Beorn. They serve as his thanes, his wardens and watchmen.

- A Beorning recognises one of the dead men as Merovech the Mighty, one of the first warriors to pledge allegiance to Beorn. Merovech was one of Beorn's must trusted allies. Merovech's duty was to travel from village to village, hearing cases and resolving disputes. Furthermore, in cases of serious crimes, it was Merovech's duty to bring the accused to Beorn for justice.

- A successful **Hunting** or **Lore** test (or the use of an appropriate Trait, like *Shadow-lore* or *Orc-lore*) identifies the arrows as Orc-arrows.

- Searching the boat lets the companions find several lengths of rope cut jaggedly with a blade. Someone was obviously tied up in the boat, and escaped by cutting their bonds and jumping into the river. Merovech's sword is missing – maybe the escaped prisoner took it with him as he fled.

- If the companions search the west bank of the river with a successful **Search** test, they come upon the remains of two Orcs lying in the mud. Both Orcs were impaled on the same spear! Merovech must have thrown his spear across the breadth of the river with enough force to punch clean through one Orc and kill another one behind the first. That was a mighty throw indeed.

Beorn's house is not too far away from this spot on the river-bank. The right thing to do is to bring the bodies of his thanes to Beorn.

The easiest thing to do is to use the boat as a makeshift bier, and carry the bodies in it. Alternatively, they can bury the bodies, mark the graves, and just bring the bear-pins as tokens to Beorn.

Ignoring the Dead

An unworthy band of adventurers, or a party already on a quest, might decide that the fate of some dead Beornings is none of their concern and ignore the boat. If you want to gently nudge the players into investigating the boat, then just have one of the companions suffer from nightmares about being attacked by Orcs while boating on the Anduin. A few nights of guilty, broken sleep should be enough to prompt the companion into visiting Beorn. Another possibility is that the companions go straight after the escaped prisoner, and do not bother visiting Beorn's house. If they do so, skip to Part Three immediately.

– Part 2 –
Beorn's Hall

The hall of Beorn is a day's easy walk from the river, although the company may be weighed down with the burden of the dead. In the middle of the afternoon, the companions find themselves walking across vast patches

of clover of different colours; the air is fragrant with the flowers' sweet scents and is droning with the sound of dozens of large bees. Several homesteads can be seen to the north and south, the residences of those who have come to live under Beorn's protection.

By sunset, the company arrives in sight of an ancient belt of mighty oak trees; beyond it rises the high thorny hedge that surrounds Beorn's Hall. A tall and wide wooden gate opens in the thorn-hedge to the north, beyond which a wide track leads south towards Beorn's house and the surrounding outbuildings.

Beyond the Gate

If the company has chosen to carry the dead Beornings with them, when they push open the heavy creaking gate and start making their way towards the house of Beorn, they feel as if they were returning home after a lengthy absence. Their spirits feel uplifted, and even the bodies of the Beornings seem suddenly easier to carry – if they turn to inspect the bodies they are surprised by the expressions on their faces: their facial features are no more twisted by pain and suffering, but composed and seemingly at peace, as if they were simply asleep. The companions feel the bonds of mutual friendship that ties together their company reinforced by the experience: add one point to the Fellowship pool.

The company is met along the track by dogs, who sniff them and bark excitedly at first, but then grow momentarily quiet as they notice the burden carried by the adventurers. These dogs knew and loved Merovech, and start howling mournfully once they realise he is dead. The adventurers are accompanied by the wailing dogs until they reach the courtyard outside Beorn's hall – a long, low building with several wings and out-houses. Bees buzz sleepily as the dusk sets it. Beorn himself sits on the porch of his house, whittling a piece of wood. Observant characters (such as those with the *Clever, Curious* or *Keen-eyed* traits) notice that he is not using a knife to carve the wood – his fingernails are tougher than oak.

Encountering Beorn

The companions are starting at a disadvantage – they are bringing bad news, and that is never the best way to start a conversation. By far the safest thing to do is to deliver the bodies, explain what happened, and wait for Beorn to decide what to do. Failing to meet Beorn's expectations or, worse, demanding a reward is unwise.

Set Tolerance

The basic Tolerance for this encounter is based on the highest Valour rating among the company. Beorn wants an honest, direct account of what happened, not weasel-words and guesses. He just wants the facts. Increase the Tolerance by one if a Beorning or Woodman is the spokesman for the group, and reduce the Tolerance by one if there are any Hobbits or Dwarves in the company (Beorn is still irked somewhat by members of those races). Remember to take into account the Standing rating of Beorning heroes, if any are present.

Finally, the way the company dealt with the bodies may heavily influence the encounter:

- If the companions brought the bodies of the dead Beornings with them, then Beorn ushers them straight into his hall; increase Tolerance by one.

  "I know these men. That is Merovech, and his battle-brother Odo. Who has done this to my friends!? How did they die?"

- If the companions just brought the bear-pin tokens, but buried the bodies respectfully, then the Tolerance is unchanged.

  "I wish you have brought them back here, but I suppose it is fitting that my brave wardens keep watch over the river for all time. Come inside. You must tell me what happened, and be quick about it."

- If the companions brought the bear-pins and just left the bodies to the carrion crows, reduce Tolerance by one.

  "What? You steal from the dead and expect thanks for it! You should have brought their bodies here, or at least piled stones on them, instead of leaving them unburied. Bah! Have you no honour? Tell me how they died, and do it fast!"

If the company as a whole fails a number of skill rolls in excess of the Tolerance rating, skip onto *Arrangements for the Night*, page 47.

Evaluating the outcome of the Encounter

The Loremaster can evaluate the outcome of the encounter by keeping track of how many successful rolls the player-heroes achieve during its Introduction and Interaction stages.

Every successful roll counts for one, while a great success equates to two successful rolls and an extraordinary result to three successful rolls. This total will be used to gauge Beorn's attitude towards the group the day after (see *The Next Day* on page 48).

Introduction

Beorn brings the company into his hall and bids them sit down on benches on either side of the long table, while he settles his massive frame into an equally massive wooden chair. Beorn is a giant of a man, dressed in a woollen tunic tied with a simple belt. He wears no jewellery or silver to mark his high standing, and the axe at his side is a plain, unadorned weapon, notched and scraped with a lifetime of use. The only sign that he is a great leader of men and not a lone woodsman is the fact that his hair and flowing black beard are now combed. Those who knew Beorn of old notice a few flecks of grey in his beard, although whether this is due to the advance of age or worry over his new responsibilities is impossible to tell.

If the company spokesman makes a brief introduction, then gets onto more important matters, call for a **Courtesy** test. If everyone makes individual introductions, Beorn grows visibly impatient.

Interaction

The interaction with Beorn is divided into four sections – *telling the tale, the exchange of news, dinner*, and *arrangements for the night.*

Telling the Tale

Beorn asks for one companion to describe what they saw at the river. The difficulty for this test is based on how the player roleplays; a clear, organised account gives a TN of 12, but guessing, speculating or hiding information raises the TN to 16. The spokesman can use **Persuade** to describe the events, or **Riddle** to piece together the evidence they collected. Beorn is troubled by the tale.

"Orcs so close to my house – they were either greatly daring, or very, very foolish. Either way, they have killed my men, and that I will not allow. I sent Merovech south, to the other villages along the Great River. I told him to sort out arguments and make sure all was well. I guess, from the sounds of it, that he and Odo were bringing a prisoner back to me for judgement."

Beorn shrugs his hairy shoulders and then continues.

"I never wanted to be a ruler of men, but if they choose to follow me, then they must keep to my laws, and them that break my laws must come before me for a trial at the Carrock."

He then asks about Merovech's purse of silver. Beorn gave Merovech a purse of silver coins when he left on his journey – did the company find it? The purse was already gone when they arrived, taken by the escaped prisoner, but the companions do not know this. Beorn takes any Beornings or Woodmen at their word, but companions from other cultures must pass a **Courtesy**, **Persuade** or **Inspire** test to give a convincing protestation of honesty:

- If a character fails at the roll, Beorn frowns and looks at him suspiciously, and any further roll attempted by the same character will be considered a failure (without the player knowing it), as Beorn now thinks the companion might be a thief and a liar.

Exchange of News

Next, Beorn asks the company for news of the wider world, and offers his own stories in exchange. The companions give an enjoyable account if they succeed in a **Courtesy** or even **Song** roll (the default TN is reduced to 12 if they talk about fighting Orcs and their ilk).

For his part, Beorn relates that he has been troubled lately by news of Orcs crossing his lands from the east, coming out of Southern Mirkwood and making for the Misty Mountains. Some travellers claimed that the growing strength of the Free Peoples has driven the Orcs out of their hiding places forcing them to flee Wilderland, but Beorn does not think they are so lucky, nor so strong. Something else is behind the movements of these Orcs. (This foreshadows the adventure *A Darkness In The Marshes* on page 84).

Dinner

"All this talking is hungry work!" declares Beorn. He claps his hands, a door at the back of the hall opens, and in comes a whole flock of sheep and several shaggy hounds. The sheep have trays of food on their backs, and the dogs can stand on their hind legs to serve their master. The food consists of fresh-baked bread, a stew of herbs and vegetables, mead, and then honey-cakes for dessert.

The companions are joined at dinner by other Beornings coming from the nearby homesteads. They have been warned of the recent events, and have come to pay their respects to the dead. As wooden drinking-bowls are raised in toast, tales are told of Merovech, Odo and other famous Beornings.

Call for rolls of **Riddle**, **Song** or **Courtesy** from the group. If the company succeed on average across these rolls (scoring at least three ordinary successes, or an ordinary success and a great success, or a single extraordinary success), then they are able to keep the mood from turning grim and every hero responsible for the success deserves to be awarded with an Advancement point. If the characters do not succeed in these rolls, then women begin to weep and the men stare glumly into their mead-bowls as everyone remembers the dead.

Arrangements for the Night

If the companions haven't exceeded the Tolerance rating of the encounter by now, Beorn offers them beds in his hall. Otherwise, he stalks out the door at nightfall, and one of the other Beornings tells the characters they can sleep in the stables. The companions can raise a fuss about this treatment if they wish with a **Persuade** roll; if they succeed, then the Beornings let them sleep in the hall. If they fail, then one of Beorn's wonderful horses closes the barn door in their faces, and they have to sleep outside.

During the night, wherever the company sleeps, they hear the noise of some tremendous animal growling and snuffling somewhere by the house of Beorn. Before they can do something about it, the sound swiftly dies away.

- Any hero forced to sleep outside must pass a Fatigue test. Adventurers who fail their **Travel** skill roll sleep horribly and see their Fatigue rating raised by one by morning.

A Nightly Adventure

A Beorning companion possessing a virtue like *Brothers to Bears* or *Night-goer* (or simply a curious adventurer!) will almost certainly try to investigate the snuffling and join Beorn in his nocturnal hunt in bear-form. This escapade is up to the Loremaster to improvise, but Beorn will most likely ignore and leave behind any hero not in spirit form, or will attempt to confound any pursuer and get them lost in the wild. A hero possessing the *Night-goer* virtue might be in for an unforgettable experience, as he joins a troop of spirit-bears as they dance and hunt with Beorn all through the night for traces of what happened to Merovech and Odo. The next paragraph, *The Next Day* below, contains some information about what Beorn did during the night that might need adjusting to reflect the events of your game.

The Next Day

The following morning finds Beorn in a much better mood. One of his dogs leads the characters back to his hall, where they find the big man happily making toast and cheese for breakfast. A dozen Orc-helms lie piled on the table; anyone who examines one notices that it is dented as if struck with immense force. Outside the stead, there are a dozen pikes with fresh Orc-heads on them.

Beorn puts plates of toast and cheese down in front of the company, and then takes a huge iron kettle off the fire and fills a strange teapot made of some greenish metal and decorated with pictures of birds.

"I was busy last night. A dozen Orcs in my land without so much as a by-your-leave. The deaths of a thousand Orcs would not pay for the deaths of Merovech and Odo. I would sooner have my friends back, but at least some justice has been done."

"Now, I also found signs – footprints, scents, the night-speech of bird and beast – that there was a third man on the boat. As you guessed, he was a prisoner, and it looks like he escaped when the Orcs attacked. He went south, and he must be found."

Beorn asks the companions to undertake this quest. The circumstances and the offered reward vary depending on how successful they were during the previous encounter with him. Compare the number of successful rolls they achieved during the episode with the entries given below.

1: Beorn grumbles that the companions are stormcrows who bring nothing but bad news, and that if they are ever to be welcome in his lands again, then they must complete Merovech's mission. Obviously, fate put the company on the path to finding that boat, and he is in no mood to be picky with fate's offerings!

2-4: Beorn grudgingly offers a purse of coins as bounty on the escaped prisoner. If the companions find him and bring him back alive, Beorn will distribute that silver among them to a value of 1 Treasure for each companion, and then send them off.

5-6: Beorn is impressed with the companions. Apply the results of 2-4 above; additionally, he asks them to undertake this quest as a favour to him, and he will one day do them a favour in return. He bestows his blessing upon them and asks if the companions wish to leave immediately, or if they will attend the funeral.

7+: Beorn is very impressed. Apply the results of 5-6 above; additionally, Beorn asks that they attend the funeral and speak in memory of Merovech and Odo's final stand. Finally, at the end of the adventure Beorn will be available to be listed as a patron for the company.

The Funeral

The funeral of Merovech and Odo is held that evening. Neither of the two men were married, although Odo was betrothed to a young shield-maiden named Avila who stands quietly with red-rimmed eyes, refusing to weep.

If the bodies were brought back to the hall, then they are taken to a line of burial mounds nearby to be interred. Beorn honours his thanes by covering their bodies with two funeral cloths decorated with golden bees. If they were left by the river, then only the first day of the ceremony takes place here, and the next day the mourners will travel down to the river to gather the dead.

The funeral rites take several days, but the first night is devoted to honouring the fallen. The Beornings tell stories and sing songs of the thanes' heroism and bravery. Beorn watches over the ceremony in silence, but nods gravely when the tales please him. As the companions know the most about how the two warriors died (even though they only found their bodies), they are invited to speak.

- A successful **Inspire** or **Song** roll impresses the crowd, especially if the companion mentions the heroic spear-throw that killed two Orcs at once. A failed roll means the character cannot find the right words, or exaggerates. The Beornings do not mind boasting, but hate lies.

If the companions act respectfully at the funeral, then the Standing of any Beornings in the group is temporarily raised by one for the rest of the year.

- Part Three - The Chase

Beorn scented the trail of the prisoner on the banks of the Great River – he emerged from the water a short distance downstream, and then headed south along an ancient path. As the companions are unsure how many days passed between the deaths of Merovech and Odo and the discovery of the boat, they do not know how much of a head start the prisoner has. Beorn suggests that the prisoner might return to the lands he came from, the Beorning settlements south of the Old Ford, on the edge of the land of the Woodmen.

- The journey south is around 60 miles, along open terrain in Free lands. On foot, this should take around three days; if the companions are travelling with mounts or are given them by Beorn, they can make it south in two days. Only a single Fatigue check is needed for this leg of the journey (TN 12).

In the morning of the second day of travel the company should cross the Road near the Old Ford, where a great bridge of stone once stood, built of old by Men from the south, they say. Another day of marching will bring the company to the vicinity of the Beorning village of Stonyford, and Part Four of their adventure.

Planning the Route

The lands around the Old Ford are, in recent days, some of the safest and most-travelled in Wilderland. The Beornings protect this region, and have driven out the Orcs and outlaws who once preyed on the few travellers who passed this way. These are green, bright lands, untrammelled by farms or fences. They are mostly empty, but there are a few isolated homesteads in sheltered dales along the river.

- As usual, players may make a preliminary skill roll (a **Lore** test at TN 14) to assess their route (see *Preliminary Rolls*, on page 151 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*) and garner bonus Success dice to use when looking for Oderic (see *Searching for the Fugitive*, below).

Hazards Suggestions

The land of the Beornings is usually safe, so the company might expect to face no Hazards worth the name. However, the Orc band that Beorn fought the night before was not entirely defeated, and there are still a few scattered Orcs abroad in the wild. These Orcs might attack the company at night, or try to sneak up and cut the look-out's throat so they can murder the rest of the company as they sleep.

Searching for the Fugitive

The company is not travelling with a destination in mind; they are hunting for an escaped prisoner. Each day, their huntsmen and scouts are allowed to make two skill rolls each (using either **Hunting**, **Explore** or **Search**): every successful roll yields traces of Oderic and lets the company stay on the track. Most of these signs are subtle ones – a footprint here, a path through the meadows there, marks of a campfire and so on, but three are of special note.

- **Dead Orc:** The corpse of an Orc lies at the bottom of a stony gully. The Orc was one of those who attacked the boat; Oderic slew the monster and kicked its body down into this pit. Examining the Orc's filthy remains shows that its head was chopped clean off with a sword, possibly even the same sword of Merovech that went missing from the boat.

- **The farmstead:** The company passes an isolated Beorning farmstead. There, they meet an old man called Geral. If questioned with **Riddle** or **Courtesy** (TN12, Geral is a *kind* old man), he tells them that a young adventurer stayed with him a few days ago, and left after one night leaving a silver coin as payment. Geral remembers the young man's name as Oderic and says he was an odd sort, but respectful and generous.

- **Rumours on the road:** The company meets a small band of Woodmen, travelling to Mountain Hall in the far west. They passed through the village of Stonyford recently, and heard tell there of a bloody murder. Some Beorning named Oderic murdered another hunter, an older man called Rathfic. According to the tale, Rathfic caught Oderic in bed with his wife, the two fought, and Rathfic was mortally wounded.

– Part Four – Kinstrife

There has not been a ford at Stonyford for hundreds of years. The river was passable here once, but no longer. The tumbledown pile of stones atop a low hill were once a watchtower that guarded the road in a time when kings ruled the land. The village remains, though; a few wooden huts that cluster around the foot of the mound by the river. The folk here survive by fishing and hunting, as they have done for many generations. The trail of the escaped prisoner leads to this village, and the circumstances behind his crimes can be discovered here.

Unless the company travels by night and avoids the path by the river, the villagers spot them long before they arrive, and the village's elders come out to meet them. The Beornings do not welcome visitors to their lands with ease, so the company must convince the elders to let them enter the village.

Encountering the Village Elders

The three Beornings who face the company are: **Hartwulf**, a greybeard who leans heavily upon a staff, and mumbles when he talks. The villagers call him their wiseman, and believe he knows all sorts of magical secrets – but who knows what he means when he mutters to himself? **Ava**, Hartwulf's daughter and one of the strongest personalities in the village. She is the clan's diplomat and spokeswoman when trading and dealing with outsiders. She mistrusts visitors, and always tries to dissuade them from coming too close to the village. **Williferd**, a warrior. With the recent death of Rathfic and the disgrace of Oderic, Williferd is now the most experienced warrior of Stonyford. He is very nervous about this new honour, and is clearly jumpy. He keeps one hand on his axe-handle at all times.

Set Tolerance

The Beornings respect warriors more than scholars, so the encounter's initial Tolerance is equal to the highest Valour among the company. Add one to the rating if a Beorning or Woodman is the spokesman, and reduce it by one if there are no Beornings or Woodmen in the group at all. Raise the Tolerance by one if the companions declare they are on a mission for Beorn immediately or by two if the company has Beorn's blessing. Finally, remember to take into account the Standing rating of Beorning heroes, if any are present.

Evaluating the outcome of the Encounter

As before, the Loremaster can keep track of how many successful rolls the adventurers achieve during the encounter, and then use the total to evaluate its outcome (see *Sorrows Old & New* below).

Introduction

The three villagers introduce themselves first, with Ava doing most of the talking.

> *"Strangers we do not welcome to our homes. Unless you have business here, you must move on. Woodland Hall is but a few days travel east of here; doubtless you will find better hospitality there. We have suffered enough sorrow in recent days. I beg you, leave us in peace."*

If the company introduce themselves collectively, **Awe** is the most appropriate ability for a spokesman, but Ava is a *hardened* diplomat, and proves difficult to impress (TN 16). If they choose to introduce themselves individually, then use **Courtesy** at the default difficulty.

Interaction

The first thing the companions need to do is to get permission to enter the village. This requires a Courtesy roll, or a thorough telling of how Oderic has escaped and how the companions have tracked him back here (this grants an automatic success). If allowed to enter the village, they are told by Ava that they can sleep in the empty house near the river-bank – this was Oderic's house.

- Unless any companion has obtained a great or extraordinary success with his **Courtesy** roll, Ava demands they hand their weapons over to Williferd before entering the village.

Once they have permission to enter the village, they can share news. On hearing that Oderic has escaped, the Beornings are alarmed. Ava shakes her head.

> *"These are grim tidings. Oderic is a murderer and kinslayer. We thought that by sending him to the Carrock for judgement, we were done with his evil."*

Her aged father mutters something into his beard about curses and ghosts, while Williferd grips his axe even tighter and looks around warily as if expecting Oderic to jump out from behind a tree.

A successful **Riddle** roll can get the same stories from Ava as the company gets in *Sorrows Old & New*, below, although Ava's version of events is less charitable than some. Ava tells the company that she has heard nothing more of Oderic since he was taken away up the river by Merovech and Odo, but it is possible that someone in the village saw him and said nothing.

Barred From The Village

If the company fail the encounter and are not permitted to enter the village openly, then their adventure can continue if they search the lands around the village. They meet one of the villagers, a boy named after Beorn, who tells them that he saw Oderic steal a boat and cross the Great River a few days ago. The adventure continues in Part Five, but the companions now have little hope of redeeming Oderic without knowing how he came to be outlawed.

Sorrows Old & New

The company's welcome in the village depends on how the encounter went. Again, check the number of successful rolls to determine the villager's goodwill.

1: The villagers offer no welcome, and barely acknowledge the travellers' existence. They are given stale bread to eat. The difficulty for all Personality and Custom rolls in the village is set at TN 16.

2-4: The villagers give a grudging welcome, and invite the company to share their fires. They are given fish to eat, and the TN for Personality and Customs rolls stays at the default level of TN 14.

5+: The villagers greet the travellers as welcome guests! A deer is roasted, and the whole village gathers around to hear news and tell tales. The TN for Personality and Customs rolls is reduced to 12.

Village Stories and Rumours

Asking about what happened is like opening a floodgate. Everyone in the village has their own opinions about Oderic, Rathfic and Brunhild. **Riddle** rolls get the following information, and **Insight** can be used to weight its truthfulness. Entries in **bold** are true facts, whereas those in *italic* are opinions.

Oderic's family were killed by outlaws when he was a young child.
He's been strange since then.
He never stopped practising fighting since that day.
Oderic was fostered by an old warrior called Helmgut, father of Brunhild.
Helmgut treated Oderic like his son.
Helmgut never liked Oderic; he only took him in to honour Oderic's dead father.
Helmgut was the best warrior in the village, and he was training Oderic to follow in his footsteps. When Rathfic came to live here, Oderic was jealous.
Oderic and Brunhild lived like sister and brother.
Oderic was very close to Brunhild.
Oderic was obsessed with Brunhild, and would follow her around the village.
He would do anything to protect her.
If he came back to the village, she would know about it.
A few years ago, Rathfic came down from the mountains to settle here.
He became the village's chief warrior, and was betrothed to Brunhild.
Rathfic bought Brunhild from her father.
Helmgut was pleased to have Rathfic as a son-in-law.
Rathfic was a great warrior, and an honourable man.
Rathfic was a great warrior, but he was often cruel. He cared only about himself, and treated his wife like a servant.
Oderic always hated Rathfic because he took Oderic's place in Helmgut's heart.
Oderic always hated Rathfic because he married Brunhild.
One night, Oderic and Rathfic fought, and Oderic killed Rathfic.
Oderic crept into Rathfic's house and murdered him while he slept.
Rathfic caught Oderic in bed with Brunhild.
Rathfic caught Oderic spying on him.
Oderic broke into Rathfic's house and challenged him to a fight.
After killing Rathfic, Oderic surrendered to his foster-father Helmgut, and Helmgut sent Oderic to the Carrock.
Oderic would have fought his way out, but he couldn't bring himself to kill his foster-father.
Oderic would have fought his way out, but Brunhild begged him to stop.
The fighting-madness left Oderic, and he realised what he had done.

The Foster-Father's Tale

Old Helmgut, Oderic's foster-father, lies in his hut with a skin of wine, staring at the woven rushes of the ceiling. Since the murder of Rathfic by his foster-son, he has fallen into a deep despair. The company can question him, but doing so is risky. The old warrior has refused to leave his house since Oderic left the village; he's drunk, emotional and armed with a big axe. If the company go in there to question him, they make get more cloven heads than answers.

Set Tolerance

The Tolerance for this encounter is based on Valour. Reduce the Tolerance by 1 if there are no Beornings in the group.

Introduction

Helmgut has no time for petty-words; **Courtesy** automatically fails, and **Awe** is at TN16. Helmgut really doesn't want to talk to anyone other than his wineskin.

Interaction

Asking him what happened requires **Persuade** or **Inspire**. If convinced to talk, Helmgut exclaims that he heard his daughter scream, and came to investigate. He found Oderic standing over Rathfic's body, and he immediately assumed that Oderic had killed Rathfic out of jealousy. He struck Oderic, knocking the dagger from the boy's hand. Oderic, he sobs, was always a difficult, angry young man, and while Helmgut tried to raise the boy, he has failed. Now his son-in-law is dead, his foster-son is a murderer, and his daughter refuses to speak to him.

- If the company fail to convince Helmgut to speak, or if they exceed the Tolerance of the encounter, he tries to attack them in a rage — but the old man is too drunk and exhausted to put up a proper fight; he just swings his axe wildly before collapsing into a wine-sodden heap.

The Widow's Tale

Since the death of her husband and the arrest of her foster-brother, Brunhild has attended to her duties as a grieving widow. Every day, she puts fresh flowers on the grave-mound of Rathfic, and lights candles at night to guide his soul to whatever Doom awaits mankind. She has become cold and brittle, like a woman of ice.

As the only witness to Rathfic's murder, questioning Brunhild is vital if the company are to discover the truth

about what happened. So far, Brunhild has been icily polite but evasive when anyone questioned her, saying only that Oderic had committed a crime and would be judged at the Carrock. This icy demeanour hides her own guilt and confusion – she blames herself for Oderic's actions.

Set Tolerance

Brunhild respects insight and good judgment, so the initial Tolerance for the Encounter is based on Wisdom. Reduce this Tolerance by 1 if there are no women or Hobbits in the group – Brunhild keeps up a brave face in front of warriors, but if she feels she can trust a companion, she may open up. Reduce the Tolerance by 1 if more than three companions question Brunhild at once.

Introduction

Awe means nothing to Brunhild and fails automatically; she is a daughter to warriors and wife to warriors, and has heard all their bluster and empty words before. If the heroes introduce themselves through **Courtesy** they have a chance to win her confidence.

Interaction

There are three questions that the companions are likely to ask Brunhild. Each question requires a successful **Persuade** roll; **Inspire** or **Insight** might also work.

What happened that night?

Brunhild explains that her brother Oderic came to her and said that he was tired of the village, and that he intended to leave and seek his fortune in the wild. No-one in the village other than Brunhild really trusted him, he said, and he was sick of the place. He asked her to come with him – she hesitated, and then Rathfic came home. The two men never liked each other, and they immediately began arguing. She tried to stop them, and Rathfic struck her in the face, knocking her down. Oderic attacked him, one of them drew a knife, they struggled – and then the knife was in Rathfic's chest, and there was blood everywhere. She screamed.

Shortly afterwards, her father Helmgut came running. He saw Oderic standing there over Rathfic's body, and hit his foster-son with the flat of his axe. Oderic did not even try to fight back; he just dropped the knife and fell.

Was Rathfic a good husband?

Not especially, but neither was he a monster. He and Oderic quarrelled, but Oderic fought with everyone in the village. She loves her foster-brother, but he has a talent for making enemies. Still, the person who is most to blame, she thinks, is herself – she wishes she could have stopped the fight. No-one needed to die that day.

Has she seen Oderic since then?

She hesitates, then nods. Oderic visited her one night, a few days ago. He explained that Merovech and Odo were killed by Orcs, but that he managed to slip away in the confusion. He believed that fate had given him a second chance, and that he now intended never to return to the land of the Beornings. He went west, across the Great River. She does not expect to see her brother ever again.

Optional Complication: Brunhild's Crime

Playtesters suggested an interesting added twist to the dilemma – what if Brunhild was the real murderer? She could have stabbed her husband to protect her foster brother. In this variation, Oderic is protecting Brunhild by taking the blame and fleeing. If the company are unwilling to defend Oderic at the Carrock, then he could confess the truth to them (see page 64 below).

- Part Five -
The Chase Continued

If the companions have found the right clues in the village of Stonyford, they will have learned something about Oderic's whereabouts from Brunhild. If they failed to find anything of interest, they might discover that Oderic crossed the river from the fact that a boat has gone missing (see *Signs of the Prisoner* below).

If they are set on the right track, this second chase will take them across the Great River and then south into the woods north of the Gladden Fields. These are ill-omened woods, long a dwelling-place of evil and misfortune.

Across the Great River

The company must first cross the Anduin. If they are on good terms with the Beornings of the village, they can be ferried across. Otherwise, they must either find a way to be granted passage or else brave the river. The frantic current of the Anduin slows as it approaches the morass of the Gladden Fields, so a strong swimmer may be able to cross the water.

- The chase takes the company southwest and then south for forty miles in the wilderness and across sparse woods in the West Anduin Vales (Border lands). Three days of march and a single Fatigue test (TN 14) are needed for this leg of the journey.

Planning the Route

As usual, the players may make a preliminary skill roll (a **Lore** test at TN 14) to assess their route (see *Preliminary Rolls*, on page 151 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*) and perhaps gain bonus Success dice to use when looking for Oderic (see *Signs of the Prisoner*, below).

Hazards Suggestions

This part of the West Anduin Vales is perilous – the Woodmen may range out from Mountain Hall, but they cannot stop monsters creeping out of the Gladden Fields and the wilds of the Nether Vales.

Hungry Wolves (Look-out - Dangerous Meeting)
A pack of wolves has crossed the Gladden River and are now hunting in the vales. While they are unlikely to attack a band of armed adventurers, a lone Look-out might be easier prey, especially if he is a toothsome morsel like a Hobbit or a fat Dale-man.

Swarms of Midges (All Companions - Fatigue)
Blood-sucking insects from the marshes descend on the company. Everyone must make another **Travel** test. If they fail, they add Fatigue again, twice if they fail with an . These extra Travel tests can trigger yet more hazards.

Outlaws (Scout or Huntsman - Dangerous Meeting)
While travelling away from the rest of the company, one companion spies a patrol of four outlaws approaching. Does the companion race back to the company, or try to hide? Use the Outlaw statistics on page 56 and 57 for the bandits.

Signs of the Prisoner

Again, **Hunting**, **Explore** or **Search** rolls are needed to search for signs of Oderic's movements. Every hero is allowed to make two skill rolls each day, with every successful roll revealing a significant sign of Oderic's passage. Every clue leads the company progressively to the south, towards the woods north of the Gladden Fields.

- **The Boat:** One of the first clues found by the travellers is along the banks of the Great River. Oderic stole a boat and rowed several miles downstream before he abandoned it on the west bank. The companions come upon this boat as they search the riverside.

- **The Broken Knife:** Oderic made camp one night on the rolling plains between the river and the wood, and while trying to prize a stone from his boot he accidentally snapped the blade of a knife he stole from Odo's body. The broken shards of a Beorning-made knife lie in a sheltered dell, near the ashes of a campfire.

- **The Fight:** A day or two before the company arrives, Oderic was taken prisoner by outlaws, and the signs of the fight are still visible to those who can read them, at a short distance from the woods. Trampled grasses, splinters hewn from a shield and a broken spear-haft speak of a battle between one warrior and several others. A successful roll of **Riddle** reveals that the lone warrior put up a brave fight, but was outnumbered and overwhelmed. An especially good roll may reveal that his foes spared his life, bound his hands, and led him off into the woods. A clear trail leads into the forest.

Signs of a Host

When the company finally arrives at the eaves of the forest, a successful **Explore** roll (TN 12) reveals clear signs that a number of armed men are nearby. There are tracks in the mud, trees have been hacked down for firewood and there is no game within several miles. These strangers are not wood-wise and so are unlikely to be Woodmen from Mountain Hall. A **Lore** or **Battle** roll (TN12) suggests that these might be strangers from the south.

- Part Six -
Cruel, Ill-Favoured Men

The bandits hiding in the woods are cruel and malicious men, lawless souls who have been easily seduced by the growing power of Mordor. They are thieves, marauders and slavers, with no common cause save wickedness and greed. Some are exiles cast away from the Horse-lords to the South, some are from the east, some from the Woodland tribes, and still others call no place home save the open road. They have come to Wilderland in search of treasure and conquest. Their leader, though, is no mere bandit. Valter the Bloody believes that he is a king.

Valter the Bloody

Valter's ancestor Valind was a knight and close kin to Girion, Lord of Dale, before the Dragon came. When Girion fell, Valter's ancestor took a fast horse and fled the burning city. He travelled to the East, and sired a child on some tavern girl. His son took up his father's sword and armour, as did his son, and his son after him, and with the sword came the dream of kingship. Valter desires to make his own kingdom in the wild, and to rule over lesser men.

For many years, this dream was nothing but an idle fancy, until some dark fate guided his steps and he fell in with a company of outlaws in the south. He rose to lead the band, and brought them north into Wilderland, promising them that they would have land, women, gold, respect and honour when he came into his new kingdom.

Valter is a born leader of men. He can be charming and well-spoken, but he believes that honour and truth are delusions born of listening to too many stories. Only strength and desire matter. He has a talent for worming out secrets and for finding weaknesses in the character of others. If you secretly nurse some grudge, if some niggling desire gnaws at your soul, if you ever felt that you were not given your proper due, then Valter knows it and promises that he will make everything right – if you follow him. When his men captured a sullen-eyed Beorning spy, Valter did not have the boy put to death or tortured as some advised.

Instead, he freed Oderic from his bonds, fed him, returned his sword and asked him where he came from and how he came to be wandering in the wilds. Valter intends to begin his conquest with the village of Stonyford. Oderic knows that village as well as anyone, and Valter believes that the young Beorning boy will be key to his conquest of Wilderland. Today Stonyford, tomorrow more of the land of the Beornings... and who knows what the next year will bring? The Dragon conquered Dale and robbed Valter's ancestor of his rightful place; now Valter is the conqueror!

Valter and the Spirit

If the Loremaster is using the linking story for the adventures (see page 5), then Valter is serving the will of the Gibbet King, who plans to use Valter's attacks on the Free Peoples as a distraction. Should the company slay Valter, then they find a mummified human head among his possessions (the spirit used the head to let his will be known to Valter).

Valter the Bloody

Valter claims to be the descendant of noble kings, but he would be a bloody-handed tyrant if he ever won his kingdom. His smile is the last thing his foes ever see.

Valter the Bloody:

Attribute Level	
5	
Endurance	Hate
19	4
Parry	Armour
5 + 3 (Great Shield)	3d +4 (Mail shirt and Helm)
Skills	
Personality, 4	Survival, 2
Movement, 3	Custom, 3
Perception, 2	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Sword	3
Special Abilities	
Commanding Voice	*Reduce Valter's Hate point score to restore one point of Hate to all his followers (but not to himself).*

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Long sword	5	10	16	Disarm
Notes				
Valter uses his Long sword exclusively as a one-handed weapon.				

Outlaw Archers:

Mean, ill-favoured men from the South, armed with bows and knives. Some ride ugly, half-starved horses.

Attribute Level	
3	
Endurance	Hate
14	1
Parry	Armour
3	2d
Skills	
Personality, 2	Survival, 2
Movement, 3	Custom, 1
Perception, 2	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Bow	2
Dagger	1
Special Abilities	
Deadly Archery	*The archer may spend a point of Hate to add his Attribute level to damage with a successful bow attack.*

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Bow	5	10	14	Pierce
Dagger	3		12	

Outlaw Warriors:

Grim-faced men, veterans of many battles.

Attribute Level	
3	
Endurance	Hate
14	2
Parry	Armour
4	3d+1
Skills	
Personality, 2	Survival, 2
Movement, 2	Custom, 1
Perception, 2	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Spear	2
Axe	2
Special Abilities	
No Quarter	

Weapons:

Weapon Type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Spear	5	9	14	Pierce
Axe	5		18	Break shield

The Bandit Camp

The bandits are encamped in the shelter of the forest, twenty miles north of the Gladden River. There are some fifty warriors in their camp, and more will come from the south if Valter's plans come to fruition. Add in followers, wives, children and slaves, and the full group numbers nearly one hundred.

Valter's tent is easily visible at the centre of the camp, and Valter himself can be seen around the main campfire with his cronies and aides. He keeps Oderic close at hand, and makes sure that the young man always has food and drink and a place of honour at Valter's side – he wants to be sure of winning Oderic's loyalty, so the boy will betray the Beornings and tell Valter all their secrets.

Oderic's own bedroll is at the edge of the camp, where he sleeps under the stars.

Outlaw Patrols

The bandits rely on their patrols to warn them of danger. If the companions can evade or defeat one of these patrols, they can sneak up on the camp and observe it from a close distance without grave risk. Each patrol consists of two outlaw archers and two outlaw warriors.

Evading the Patrol

The company can use **Awareness** to spot the patrol in advance, **Explore** to find a good hiding place, and **Stealth** to hide from them. The TN for the **Stealth** roll varies from TN10 to TN14, depending on how many preparations the company took.

Ambushing the Patrol

The TN for ambushing a patrol is 14; the company can use **Battle** or **Stealth** as they prefer (see page 168 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*).

Sneaking Through the Forest

Once past the patrols, the company must scout out the bandit camp. **Explore** is more useful than **Stealth** here, as a good explorer can find paths through the wood that bypass the enemy and bring the company right to the edge of the camp. Daring adventurers could even use **Athletics** to travel through the tree-tops.

Watching for Oderic

From a hidden vantage point overlooking the camp – and there are several excellent and leafy trees in the area – the company can watch the outlaws and identify Oderic. A successful **Insight** roll reveals the following:

- Oderic is being treated as an honoured guest by the outlaw king, but the other outlaws watch him suspiciously. He is not a prisoner, but he is under guard.
- One of the outlaws shadows Oderic wherever he goes.
- Oderic sometimes goes walking alone in the woods, followed by his outlaw watcher; if the companions can deal with the watcher, then they could talk to Oderic – or take him prisoner.

Sending Word to Beorn

The company may decide that a whole army of outlaws is much more important than one runaway Beorning, and conclude that their duty at this point is to return to Beorn's stead and warn the Beornings and the Woodsmen of this new danger. Point out that their mission is to recapture Oderic, but if the players are adamant, let them retreat. The battle with the outlaws will be even bloodier in this case.

– Part Seven –
The Outlaw Boy

The company have found their quarry, but now must spirit him away from the outlaw band. There are three ways to do this (and many tactics suggested by the players may be reproduced customising the suggestions given below).

Openly, by Force

A truly valorous (if lacking in wisdom) company could take on the whole outlaw band in a surprise attack and carry Oderic away. This is not quite as suicidal as it sounds if the company have a few doughty warriors and can move fast. They could attack the camp in the night, grab Oderic, then flee into the trees.

This is the least likely option for most companies. If the players choose this approach, then assume that the outlaw camp has six guards at night, and that every five rounds of combat after the attack begins, another 1-6 outlaws join the fray until the whole camp is roused.

Secretly, by Cunning

The company could lure Oderic away, deal with the one outlaw assigned to watch him, and then knock Oderic out or put a sword to his throat.

By Convincing Oderic to leave Willingly

Again, the company must deal with the outlaw watchman, but they could then choose to appeal to Oderic's better nature and convince him to aid them against the outlaws or come back to the Carrock for trial.

Playing Oderic Kinslayer

The young Beorning man is the key character in this scene, so let's take a moment to discuss how best to play him. Oderic is a tragic hero – his great gifts are matched by equally great flaws of character. He wants to be loved, but his dark moods and sullen attitude estrange him from everyone else. Back in Stonyford, the villagers mistrusted him from a young age because of his fey moods and the horrible fate of his parents, and Brunhild was his only friend.

He desperately wanted to prove himself to his foster-father Helmgut but, while Oderic is an excellent warrior, he was no leader of men, which is why Rathfic took Helmgut's place instead of Oderic. Oderic, of course, saw this as a betrayal – and was betrayed again when Brunhild married Rathfic. Convinced that there was nothing left for him in the village, he tried to leave, only to be insulted and threatened by a drunken Rathfic. Oderic never meant to kill the man, but a red mist descended upon him...

When he was seized, Oderic sank into a depression that lifted when fate seemed to intervene and the Orcs killed his guards. He thought that he was free of all his previous entanglements, free to prove that he was not the troublesome orphan boy who caused trouble, but was a heroic adventurer. Instead of finding adventure, however, he has fallen in with outlaws. He has let himself be enchanted by Valter, and wants to convince himself that Valter is a kingly man who means no ill to the Beornings – but in his heart, Oderic knows that Valter is evil.

Here, then, is Oderic's dilemma. If he stays with the outlaws, he knows he is doing evil, but the outlaws offer him a place in their camp and the promise of glory. If he returns to the Beornings, he faces trial for a murder that he did not intend to commit, and he will be judged by a people who have always mistrusted and feared him.

Some of the time, Oderic is to be pitied; misfortune is piled on misfortune, and everything he touches turns to ill. Some of the time, he is to be admired; he is a brave young warrior, and could become a great hero if given the chance. The rest of the time, the players should just want to slap him – he's a moody teenager with a big sword who is convinced the world is against him!

The Outlaw Watchman

The chief, Valter the Bloody, ordered one of his most trusted henchmen to shadow Oderic. This watchman is a grim trapper and huntsman from Wilderland named Faron. He never talks except when he is scornful, and never smiles except when he plunges his knife into something living. In his youth, he was silent as a shadow; he is not as lithe as he once was, but he is still cunning enough to shadow Oderic without the younger man spotting him.

If the company are to speak to Oderic alone, they need to deal with Faron. They might:

- Lure the huntsman away with a trick. It is plain to see from looking at him that he is a cruel man, and while he might raise the alarm if he sees a group of intruders, he would prefer to deal with a lone traveller on his own.

- Ambush him and either kill him or knock him out before he can raise the alarm.

- Use some ability (**Craft**, or **Herb-lore**) to drug his ale and knock him out.

Once Faron is dealt with, the company may approach Oderic.

Faron, the Trapper:

Faron was exiled from his home when he began to hunt two-legged prey...

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
16	4
Parry	Armour
5	2d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 3
Movement, 3	Custom, 1
Perception, 3	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Spear	3
Axe	2
Special Abilities	
Snake-Like Speed	

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Spear	5	9	14	Pierce
Axe	5		18	Break shield

Capturing Oderic

The direct approach is to engage Oderic in combat. While the boy is a skilled and determined warrior, driven by a gushing heart-spring of discontent and hatred, he is only one man against the whole company. Oderic fights with the sword he took from Merovech, putting all the skills he learned from old Helmgut into action.

To defeat Oderic, the company can either:

- Reduce him to 0 Endurance
- Reduce him to ¼ his starting Endurance and wound him
- Disarm him (using a Called Shot from a sword)

Oderic:

It can be a great misfortune to be born a hero when your own folk fail to recognise your true worth.

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
18	3
Parry	Armour
5	1d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 2
Movement, 2	Custom, 2
Perception, 3	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Sword	4
Axe	2
Special Abilities	
Savage Assault	

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Sword	5	10	16	Disarm
Axe	5	ᚠ	18	Break shield

If the company capture Oderic, they can either take him prisoner and flee into the woods, or else speak to him.

Speaking to Oderic

This is an especially tricky encounter. If the company have not visited Stonyford, they are unlikely to be able to convince Oderic to go with them peacefully.

Set Tolerance

The Tolerance for this encounter is one by default, unless the company mention Brunhild in their introduction, in which case it is increased by one. If a companion has a Valour or Wisdom rating of 3 or more, or is a Beorning or Woodman with a Standing score of 3 or more, increase the Tolerance by another point, reflecting Oderic's admiration for such a hero.

Introduction

This is no time for **Courtesy** – the company must use **Awe** or **Persuade**: among other things, Oderic is *wilful*, so the TN is set at 16. The best introduction is at sword-point here – if the company show they could take Oderic prisoner, but want to talk to him instead of just attacking him, then he will listen to them.

Interaction

Oderic is initially suspicious and mistrustful of the companions. The first thing he wants to know is what they are doing here. The company can use **Awe** (if they want to impress him) or **Persuade** (to convince him they mean him no harm). **Insight** reveals that the boy is fighting against himself; he wants to believe that the outlaws are his friends, but he knows they are bandits and murderers. The company need to make him confront this truth.

Inquiring about Oderic's involvement with the outlaws

Oderic admits that Valter wants him to reveal the secret defences and strongholds of the Beornings. He knows that Valter intends to attack the Beornings, but refuses to admit it to himself. The company can use **Battle** to point out the obvious reason why Valter would want to know about the Beorning's defenses, **Persuade** to beg Oderic to see reason, or **Inspire** to make Oderic look within himself. Using Brunhild or Helmgut against him with **Persuade** also works well – Oderic cannot bear the thought of bringing more harm to his foster-family.

Proposing Oderic returns

Oderic fears returning to the Beornings, as he believes that he will be put to death for killing Rathfic. The company could use **Persuade** or **Awe** and say they will speak for him at his trial, or **Inspire** to convince Oderic that the

honourable thing to do is take the consequences of his actions. **Lore** could be used to point out that Beorn might exile Oderic instead of killing him, and he could become a hero in exile.

Success or Failure

If the companions successfully convince Oderic to admit to himself that the bandits are plotting to attack the Beornings, and that Oderic might still have a place among his kinfolk, they must decide on their next course of action. They could bring Oderic with them back to Beorn, but that puts Stonyford in jeopardy. Oderic suggests that he could lead the outlaws into a trap by guiding them north, giving the Beornings time to rally an army. This tactic has the best chance of defeating the outlaws, but requires the company to trust Oderic to do his part.

If the company fail the Encounter, then Oderic violently opposes any proposition and attacks them. The company can still fight back and take him prisoner.

- Part Eight - Grim Tidings

The outlaw band must be stopped, and the company cannot do it alone!

If Oderic remains allied with the bandits, or the company have captured him, then they must flee and bring word to the Beornings as quickly as possible. However, if the company convinced Oderic to lead the outlaws into a trap, then the company must head to Beorn's stead as swiftly as they can to warn the chieftain so he can rally an army.

The Journey

The company is 50 miles away from Stonyford and more than a hundred miles away from Beorn's house.

- Based on the usual journey rules, the trip back to Stonyford requires four days of march and a Fatigue test (TN 14) from each player in the warmer months, while the trek from Stonyford to the house of Beorn takes three days and another Fatigue test (TN 12) from each player in the warmer months.

Forced March

The company can also press themselves, and march for more hours each day than they would otherwise dare. If the company undertakes a forced march, they halve the duration of each leg of a journey (round fractions up), leaving the number of Fatigue tests required unchanged.

When on a forced march, every time that a hero must make a Fatigue test, he must make an additional **Athletics** test: on a success the hero's Fatigue rating goes up one point, two points on a failure, and remains unchanged on a great or extraordinary success (a Fatigue rating's increase due to a forced march is recovered as usual).

*On a forced march, the trip to Stonyford would take the company two days to complete, and would require each companion to take a Fatigue test and an **Athletics** test. The trek from Stonyford to the house of Beorn would take two days, a Fatigue test and an **Athletics** test.*

Clouds Gather

When the company reaches his house, the shapeshifter is quick to react. Beorn may not have desired to be chieftain of a whole people, but when they are threatened, he does not stand idly by.

> *"These outlaws are a danger to me and my folk, and will be driven from Wilderland. Tonight, you shall sleep in my hall, for we leave for battle at dawn!"*

His wondrous horses ride from Beorn's stead at great speed, and bring word of the danger to many Beorning settlements and outposts in the region. Sooner than the companions expected, he assembles a fighting force of Beorning warriors to battle the outlaws. He puts the host under the command of another one of his trusted lieutenants, then vanishes into the wilderness. The Beornings know he will return to them when battle is joined.

Oderic's Fate

If Oderic is in the company's custody, he begs to be allowed to participate in the coming battle. He swears that he will return to the company if they free him for the duration of the fighting. If the company convinced him

to go with them willingly, then Oderic is as good as his word – after the battle, he returns to them to face his judgement at the Carrock. If they took him prisoner by force, but treated him fairly and convinced him to stand trial honourably, then he will also return after the battle. However, if they captured him by force and treated him as an enemy, then he throws himself into the fray and dies heroically in battle.

The Battleground

The location of the battle depends on the previous actions of the company:

Oderic guides the outlaws against the Beornings

Oderic brings the outlaws to a stand of trees on the west bank of the Great River a few miles north of Stonyford. There, they make rafts and sail across the river by night; at a spot he shows them where the crossing is especially easy. They attack Stonyford the next morning. Beorn's army arrives too late to save the village, and battle is joined in the ruins of the settlement.

Oderic is a prisoner

Without Oderic to guide them, the outlaws must travel north to the one safe crossing spot they know – the Old Ford. There, on the banks of the Anduin, they meet Beorn's army and fight.

Oderic tricks the outlaws

If the companions convince Oderic to lead the bandits into a trap, then he brings them north in the direction of the Old Ford, but convinces them that the best way of travelling without being noticed is to follow him into a steep-sided valley called the Gloomy Fold, near the ford. Travelling through this stony valley puts the outlaws at a disadvantage – it slows them down and lets the Beornings trap them.

Battle is Joined!

The companions are not the commanders of the Beorning forces in the battle. However, they do fight on the front lines. Depending on the circumstances, they face either a band of blood-thirsty outlaws flush with victory or a tired band of foes. The enemy is the same in either case, but the amount of Hate possessed by the outlaws varies.

- Battle at Stonyford: Hate 5
- Battle at the Old Ford: Hate 3
- Battle at Gloomy Fold: Hate 1

In their section of the battle, the company faces a fighting force of two Outlaw Warriors and one Outlaw Archer for every two player characters. The circumstances also affect the difficulty of gaining Success dice from preliminary rolls (see *Combat Advantages* on page 151, *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*).

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- Battle at Stonyford: TN18
- Battle at the Old Ford: TN14
- Battle at Gloomy Fold: TN12

In the Fray

The swirling melee of a large battle is confusing, and there are foes all around. The Escape Combat special task still works, but only wins a moment's respite as the adventurer finds a quiet spot in the battle. To actually leave the battleground, Escape Combat must be employed twice, as the warrior moves from the front line to the rear and then out of the fray entirely.

If the companions defeat their foes, then they break through the outlaw lines and see Valter the Bloody, the outlaw captain. Valter leads his army from the rear, and when Beorn shows up (see below), he turns tail and runs. The only way for the companions to catch or kill Valter in the battle is to break through the lines, and then engage him in combat until Beorn arrives.

If Oderic sided with the outlaws, then the company find him at Valter's side. However, when Beorn arrives and Valter flees the field, then Oderic remains and dies fighting either the companions or Beorn.

Beorn! Beorn!

At a key moment of the battle, just as the outlaws are about to rally, the Beornings start beating their spear-butts on the ground and chanting 'Beorn! Beorn! Beorn!' over and over. Any companions who join in may attempt the Intimidate Foe special task even if they are not in Forward Stance.

As the chanting reaches a crescendo, a hulking shape appears at the flank of the Outlaw forces. Beorn has arrived, wearing the shape of a giant bear. If the bandits

were charged by a storm made flesh, the effect could not be more devastating. Some of the outlaws throw down their weapons and surrender; others are crushed or torn to pieces by the wrathful bear. The battle is soon over.

After the Battle

With the outlaws defeated, the companions can bind their wounds and attend to the fallen, while they learn about the fate of the other combatants.

Oderic

If the company freed Oderic to fight in the battle, then he either returns to them as he promised, or else sells his life dearly in battle. If he sided with the Outlaws, then he is most likely dead unless the companions took him prisoner. If he tricked the Outlaws, then he survives the battle and is captured by the Beornings.

Valter The Bloody

The outlaw chief escaped death and vanished into the wild – unless the company were able to break through the enemy lines and catch him, in which case Beorn's wild attack kills him.

Brunhild & Helmgut

If the battle took place at Stonyford, then both of Oderic's relatives perished in the fighting. Otherwise, they attend the trial.

– Part Nine –
Judgement at the Carrock

The Beornings are a simple people, but they know their law. Cases are brought before a clan chieftain or before Beorn himself for judgement. Speakers on both sides may argue for their cause, trying to curry the favour of the listeners. But since Beorn is the source of all law, ultimately everything depends on the judge.

If he lives, Oderic is brought before Beorn for judgement to answer for his crimes. If he sided with the outlaws, then Beorn makes a summary judgement, and the companions need not be involved at all. However, if Oderic was brought back as a prisoner, or if he tricked the outlaws, then the case is not so clear-cut. He killed Rathfic – but how should he be punished for this crime?

The Trial

Beorn settles himself on a stone at the Carrock, overlooking the silver thread of the moonlit Anduin, and listens to his followers.

Set Tolerance

The Tolerance for this encounter is equal to the highest Wisdom in the company. It is then modified by Oderic's actions so far:

- Oderic was taken prisoner by force: -2
- Oderic went willingly: -1
- Oderic tricked the outlaws: +0

Beorning heroes may also add their Standing to the Tolerance score. Once the company exceed the Tolerance rating, then the companions are forbidden from taking further active part in the trial from that moment on.

Evaluating the outcome of the trial

The Loremaster can evaluate the outcome of the trial by keeping track of how many successful rolls the player-heroes achieve during its Introduction and Interaction stages. Every successful roll counts for one, while a great success equates to two successful rolls and an extraordinary result to three successful rolls. This total will be used to gauge what Beorn will say when calling for judgment (see *Judgement* below).

Introduction

The companions do not need to introduce themselves here. Ava is the first to speak at the trial, and she introduces Oderic's case for all to hear. She describes how Oderic was always a strange, troublesome boy, how he was jealous of Rathfic, and how he broke into Rathfic's house and killed him. She then calls on Helmgut to describe what he saw, and Oderic's foster-father mumbles a few words about how he found his son with a knife in his hand standing over Rathfic's body.

Beorn then asks if anyone else wishes to speak. If the companions wish to intervene, or if they want to use **Inspire** or **Persuade** to push Brunhild into speaking, now is the time.

Interaction

It is up to the companions to speak for or against Oderic. They can talk about the boy's heroism with **Song** or **Persuade**. They can call Brunhild or Helmgut as witnesses and interrogate them with **Insight** or **Riddle**. They can appeal to Beorn's mercy with **Persuade** or **Inspire**. They can speak of how the outlaws were defeated thanks to Oderic's trickery with **Battle**.

Each argument can be used once. The TN for all such arguments is 12.

Judgement

To influence Beorn's judgement the company need to accumulate at least 3 successes. Companions speaking against Oderic may subtract their successes from the total. When everything is said and done, Beorn sighs and learns forward. *"Kinslaying is the worst of crimes"* he rumbles, *"and this boy certainly murdered Rathfic."*

0-2 successes: *"I am sorry, but the law is clear. Oderic is to be cast out of the lands of the Beornings, never to return east of the Great River, condemned to live as an outlaw, an Orc or a Warg, in the shadows of the Misty Mountains. Every free man is given the right to slay him, would he defy his exile and dare to return."*

3-5: *"Oderic fought bravely, but he is still guilty of a crime. He is condemned to pay a man's worth in gold to Brunhild and her father Helmgut, or serve as their thrall for life."*

6+: *"Your words have moved me. I think Oderic did not mean to kill Rathfic, and while he acted unwisely, he was not the only one to do so. We will be merciful."*

Oderic accepts his fate stoically, no matter what happens.

Aftermath

Regardless of what happens at the trial, Beorn thanks the companions for recapturing the prisoner and warning him of the outlaws. He gifts them, if they ask for it or if it was previously agreed-upon, with one point of Treasure each. If they did especially well, he promises them the friendship of the Beornings for as long as there are honest men in these lands.

Fellowship Phase

This is an excellent opportunity for a member of the company to gain Beorn as a patron, or to open Beorn's house as a sanctuary.

- If the characters performed well, then all Beornings in the company see their Standing rating raised by one rank.

- those who - tarry no longer

- **When:** The company may undertake this quest at any time in any year from 2946 onwards. Thematically, it works best during the autumn of the year, when the leaves of Mirkwood turn yellow and red.

- **Where:** The adventure begins in the eaves of Mirkwood, anywhere along the forest's northern edge or along the western border as far south as Rhosgobel, but ideally near the Forest Gate.

- **What:** The company are called upon to escort an elven noblewoman from Mirkwood to the High Pass.

- **Why:** The Elf-woman asks the company to serve her, and offending so powerful an Elf would be unwise.

- **Who:** Irimë is a High Elf of the house of Gil-Galad. She has lived in Middle-earth since the days of the First Age, and now tires of the world. She is travelling West, to the Havens and from thence to the Undying Lands.

Adventuring Phase

This adventure is divided into seven parts.

Part One - The Borders of the Forest

While travelling, the companions meet a band of Elves, including Legolas, son of Thranduil and Galion. They are asked to escort Irimë to the High Pass, where she will be met by the sons of Elrond.

Part Two - Weary of the World

The company travels across Wilderland, and Irimë speaks of the history of the land and her sorrow. The companions suspect they are being followed by Orcs.

Part Three - The Hill of Woe

Waylaid by an Orc-host, the companions fight to survive until they are rescued by the Eagles.

Part Four - A Guest of Eagles

The company spends a night in the Eyrie, and Irimë speaks of the growing shadow over Middle-earth.

Part Five - The Ruins

The Eagles bring the company back to the High Pass, where they wait for the sons of Elrond. While the companions slumber, Irimë is attacked by an evil spirit, and the company are drawn into her struggle in their dreams.

Part Six - Dark Dreams

While trapped in the wraith-world, the dreaming companions are thrown into the pits of Dol Guldur. If they can sustain their hope, Irimë may prevail.

Part Seven - Dawn in the West

If Irimë survives the night, she bids the company farewell and offers her blessing for the dark days to come.

An Elf of Mirkwood

If there is an Elf of Mirkwood among the companions, the first encounter with Legolas and Galion unfolds differently, and the Elf would already know or have heard of the lady Irimë. Before the game begins, take the player of the Elf aside and tell him what he knows about Irimë.

Irime of the house of Gil-Galad is one of the most respected courtiers of King Thranduil's court. She is a Noldorin Elf, and was close kin to the rulers of the kingdom of Lindon. It is said that she wove the cloth of Gil-Galad's shining banner. She came east with Thranduil after the War of the Last Alliance, and brought light to the Elvenking's halls for many years.

In recent centuries, it is said that Irimë grows weary of the mortal world, and more and more her heart turns towards Valinor in the Uttermost West, where most of her kin now dwell. When Irimë seeks the solace of the Grey Havens, Middle-earth will be forever diminished.

- Part One -
The Borders of the Forest

This encounter may happen at any time when the company are in or near Northern Mirkwood. They might even be on another errand when they meet the Elves.

You can foreshadow this encounter by having the company see signs of Orcs, like footprints or young trees hacked down with swords for no reason other than destructive malice. The company might even run into Goblins as a Hazard episode.

- Before the encounter begins, call for **Awareness** rolls from the company's Look-out or Scout. The TN for this roll is a mighty 18 – only the truly wood-wise can detect the tread of Elves in the forest. If the roll is successful – or if there is an Elf in the company, or someone with a Wisdom rating equal to 4 or more – then the Elves greet the companions openly. Otherwise, the first sign the company see of the Elves is when they suddenly find they are surrounded by archers in the trees.

A Chance Meeting

One of the Elves steps forward to parley with the company. If the companions have had dealings with him before, they recognise Galion, Thranduil's former cup-bearer. If there are Elves in the company (or again someone with a Wisdom rating of 4 or more), then Galion asks them to speak with the lady Irimë and Prince Legolas; skip onto *The Lady's Request*, below. Otherwise, Galion addresses them in a hostile tone.

> *"You trespass in the Woodland Realm, mortals. We thought you Orcs at first by your smell. Lucky for you we stayed our hands, or you would be dead now. Tell me, have you seen Orcs in your travels. A band of them is nearby. They are hunting us, and we are hunting them."*

Galion

Galion mistrusts outsiders, but respects Valour. His Tolerance starts equal to the company's highest Valour, and is reduced by one for every Hobbit or Dwarf companion. If the company dealt with him before (for example, in the adventure of *The Marsh-Bell*), then raise or lower his Tolerance by a point or two depending on how that encounter went.

Galion wants news of the Orcs and of conditions on the road west. Anyone making a successful **Lore** roll realises that it is unusual for an Elf to take such an interest in the wider world, and that Galion must be planning a journey. Asking questions of Galion is unwise, as he sees it as prying into elven affairs. However, if the company use **Courtesy** or **Persuade**, he does reveal that a large number of Orcs – *"...powerful Mordor-Orcs, not Goblins from Hithaeglir!"* (the Misty Mountains) – came out of the Heart of Mirkwood some weeks ago and have harried his company ever since.

After a few minute's talking (or if the company impresses Galion), he brings them to meet the leaders of the Elves – see *The Lady's Request*, below. If Galion's Tolerance is not exceeded, then he gifts them with travelling supplies including waybread and fresh water before they leave (the company's next round of Fatigue tests is considered an automatic success for everyone involved).

The Lady's Request

Two of the Elves stand apart from the rest, and both seem... brighter, perhaps? Or more solid than the rest? It is hard to put one's finger on it. A companion with Wisdom of 3 or more, or a **Lore** rating of 4, or who has a suitable trait like *Elven-Lore*, recognises these as noble Elves.

One is dressed in green and brown, and carries a bow upon his back. He appears young, confident and brave, an Elf-lord in his prime. He is one of the nobility of the Woodland Realm. The other Elf wears a gown of shimmering white and cloud-grey silks, unmarked and untorn despite the thickness of the undergrowth in the forest. Her face is hidden by a grey veil, but her arms are adorned with silver bracelets, and upon her finger a ring glimmers with its own inner light. She must be one of the Noldor, of whom but a few remain in Middle-earth. The pair spend a few moments speaking to one another in the Ancient Tongue. It is unlikely any of the company speak this language (save those with the Elven-lore trait). After a moment, the young Elf-lord turns to the company and bows.

"Greetings. I am Legolas, son of Thranduil. This is the lady Irimë, of the House of Gil-Galad. The lady is journeying west, to the High Pass. It was our errand to take her there, but these Orcs must be driven from our land." He pauses and glances at the veiled woman, then goes on. *"The lady has requested that you bring her the rest of the way."*

Set Tolerance

Legolas is looking for Valour, but Irimë places more value on Wisdom. The Tolerance for this joint encounter is based on the average of the company's highest Valour and Wisdom. Increase the Tolerance by one if there are Elves in the company, and reduce it by one if there are Dwarves, as neither Legolas nor Irimë is overly fond of Durin's folk.

Evaluating the outcome of the Encounter

As for other relevant encounters presented in this guide, the Loremaster can evaluate the outcome of the encounter by keeping track of how many successful rolls are scored by the player-heroes. This time though, the Loremaster should keep a tally of how many successes each companion achieves *individually*, as the result won't be used to gauge whether the company will be allowed to take on the mission, but to evaluate the relationship between the adventurers and the Lady Irimë (see *Conclusions* below).

Introduction

Trying to use **Awe** in this case is extremely foolish: Irimë is thousands of years old. The company should use **Courtesy** to introduce themselves. Legolas does most of the talking; Irimë stands impassively, watching the companions as they speak.

Interaction

The encounter is brief, and the companions will do better to play upon their major strengths if they want to make a good impression. As far as Legolas is concerned, Irimë has made a request of these mortals, and they should carry it out without delay, and be honoured that so great a noble has deigned to entrust her safety to them. The longer he dickers with the company, the greater the chance the Orcs will cause more mischief.

Legolas tells the company that the Lady is travelling to the hidden valley of Imladris, which is Rivendell in the Common Tongue. She has sent word ahead of her coming, and riders were sent out from the Last Homely House to meet her at the crossing of the mountains. The company are to bring her from the edge of Mirkwood to the High Pass.

If the company ask for a reward, then Legolas says that his father Thranduil will recompense them for their time and inconvenience. If they ask about the Orcs, Legolas replies that he and the other Elves will hunt and harry the Orcs from Mirkwood. None will leave the forest alive. He guesses that they are a wandering band of Orcs who fled the Battle of Five Armies years previously, and have wandered in the wild since then.

If the company are courteous and respectful, then Irimë finishes the conversation by casting back her veil, revealing a beautiful and ageless face.

"I am Irimë of the House of Gil-Galad. Elen sila lumenn' omentielvo."

Conclusions

If the companions exceed the Tolerance of the Elves, then their final reward is reduced. See *Fellowship Phase*, page 83. Legolas looks as though he is about to change his mind and bring Irimë to the pass himself, but the lady touches his arm and whispers a rebuke in Elvish. Legolas frowns, but lets Irimë have her way.

If, on the contrary, the companions have successfully applied some of their skills to impress the Lady, compare the number of successful rolls each hero achieved *individually* with the entries given below.

0-3: the Lady is not impressed by the adventurer. She will generally ignore the adventurers' presence and won't address them directly, favouring other heroes who achieved a better result during the encounter (if any). This lack of consideration from such a beautiful and wise creature weighs heavily on the companion, who suffers from it so that it prevents him or her from benefitting from having a Fellowship focus as a source of Hope (see page 133 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*).

4-6: if one or more companions achieve such a result, Irimë is intrigued with their ingenuity. When she speaks, she makes sure she addresses them directly, curious about their reactions.

7+: Irimë is impressed. Apply the results of 4-6 above; additionally, at the end of the adventure the Lady will bestow her blessing on such companions, if they survive, naming them *Elf-friends* (see page 83).

Supper by the Forest Eaves

The Elves travel with the company until twilight falls, then invite them to dine with them. In a clearing, the company find a table covered in a white cloth, lamps that glow with a silver light hanging from low boughs, and a supper fit for Hobbits.

The next morning, the Elves are gone, except for Irimë, who has changed her shimmering gown for more practical travelling clothes, including a heavy hooded cloak that hides her features. Even more curiously, the company find that they are close to the western border of Mirkwood, near the road to the Old Ford, no matter where they thought they were in the forest. Presumably, the company's guide was wrong about their whereabouts; the alternative is that the company were transported many miles while they slept, which is of course impossible.

- Part Two -
Weary of the World

The journey from the edge of the wood to the Old Ford is done along a well-travelled path. As usual, the players may make a preliminary skill roll (a **Lore** test at TN 14) to gain Success dice for use on their journey (see *Preliminary Rolls*, on page 151 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*).

- The journey from the eaves of Mirkwood to the Old Ford should take one or two days, while the trip from the Ford to the High Pass normally takes two days and a Fatigue test; but this time it might take a day more, as the Lady cautions the company about spending the whole journey on the Road. If there are Orcs abroad, they are likely watching the Road, and in any case, there may be prying eyes about, and Irimë would prefer not to reveal her presence in the Wild.

The Shadow of the Past

As the company travels, Irimë speaks only when some feature of the landscape reminds her of the past. Sometimes, she sings songs of long-ago battles. While Irimë never directly betrays any emotion, her tales of the past are always tinged with sadness: she always describes how the glories of the past were destroyed or tarnished.

Intersperse the following memories with signs of the Orcs (see *A Darkness in the Present* below).

- At the Old Ford, she describes how a great bridge built by the Dwarves once spanned the river, and how it was made even greater by the men of lost Arnor. Great armies rode across that bridge, and she remembers the ice-spear of her kinsman Gil-Galad glittering in the sunlight. He rode away into shadow.

- Looking back at Mirkwood, she speaks of *Eryn Galen*, the Green Wood, for so the Elves used to call it before the Shadow came to Dol Guldur. The Wise may have driven the Necromancer from his fastness in Southern Mirkwood, but evil still lingers in its depths.

- Near the river, she describes how the Anduin flows south past the Golden Wood of *Laurelindórenan*. There is a strange note in her voice when she speaks, and cautions the company against travelling there, lest they fall into the enchantment of the Lady of the Forest.

- East of *Laurelindórenan*, she says, the river once watered the Garden Lands, where the *Enyd Bess* dwelled until the Enemy hunted them all down. The burning of their gardens was one of the worst wounds the Enemy ever inflicted upon Middle-earth. All that is beautiful fades or is destroyed.

- At night, she sings of Beleriand, which is drowned beneath the ocean, and the days of heroes.

- The Men of Dale and Woodmen she refers to as 'Middle-Men' or 'Men of Twilight', to distinguish them from the Men of Númenor she knew of old, and the 'Men of Shadow' who dwell in the East. They once had great kingdoms, but now they are a scattered people who do not remember their own great works.

- She claims to have known men like Beorn in the Second Age. They were dear to Oromë, she says, he who the Northmen call Béma, and learned secrets from his servants.

- She rarely speaks to Dwarves, and then only when she must. She does speak of Moria's glorious halls, which she visited long ago. Her bracelets were made there, and are inlaid with *ithildin*, moon-silver. It was a beautiful city, but the Dwarves were too greedy...

- Hobbits fascinate her. She has not seen any of the *periando*, as they are named in the Ancient Tongue, in many long years. They once dwelt in these parts, digging their little holes in the banks of the Great River. She does not know what happened to them; no doubt the Enemy drove them away.

Most of the words spoken by Irimë about her past hardly mean anything to adventurers who are not long-lived Elves, as the old lore of mortals runs only skin-deep in comparison to the life of the elven Lady. But something in her voice seems to awaken ancestral recollections in all who listen.

- Every companion who spends any part of the journey listening to Irimë receives an extra Experience point, as visions of the past are stirred within their minds.

Playing Irimë

Irimë is one of the oldest creatures the companions are ever likely to meet. The long years weigh heavily on her. When playing the Elf, speak quietly and sadly. Look off into the distance, as though you can see things others cannot. Never smile, unless it is tinged with melancholy.

A Darkness in the Present

After crossing the Old Ford and entering the wild lands west of the Anduin, the companions realise that they are being pursued by Orcs. Build this threat subtly. For example:

- The company's Scout spots a small band of Orcs ahead of the company.

- The company's Look-out spots cooking fires at night.

- Irimë extends her hand, and a sparrow lands on her finger. She whispers to it, and it tells her that Orcs are nearby.

A successful **Hunting** or **Stealth** roll lets the companions spy on their pursuers. They are being followed by a sizeable Orc warband, composed of at least two dozen Orcs, maybe more – certainly, too many for the company to fight with any hope of victory. These Orcs are not the same band that Legolas spoke of; more than one hunting party was sent out to find Irimë.

Once the company discover they are being chased, they may decide to turn back and head for a sanctuary like Beorn's house instead of risking the Road. If they do so, then the Orcs catch them before they reach safety (go to Part 3). Unbeknownst to the heroes, the company cannot escape the Orcs – even if they stay ahead of their pursuers, there are more Orcs coming down from the Misty Mountains to catch them between hammer and anvil...

Flight to the Pass

These Orc warbands are not random misfortune – they are part of a greater design. The Gibbet King has sensed Irimë's presence, and knows that her sorrow is her weakness. It sent the Orcs after her – and if they cannot capture her, the spirit will act directly...

The company's only apparent chance is to press on and evade the enemy. For each of the two days of march that separates them from the High Pass, the company's Scouts must make an **Explore** roll to find routes up the hillsides that are not being watched by Orcs.

- On a successful roll, the company seems to gain ground, as they advance steadily along well-hidden paths. On a failed roll, every companion sees its Fatigue rating raised by one point, as they trudge along stony tracks, the Orcs at their heels.

Once the company has reached the foothills of the Misty Mountains and the shadowy dales leading to the High Pass, the hammer finally falls, as the companions watch as groups of Orcs close in from every direction.

– Part Three –
The Hill of Woe

As the darkness draws in, the Orcs come closer. The noose closes upon the adventurers. They know there are many Orcs on their trail, but then the company's look-outs spot more Goblins coming down from the hills. There is no escape – all that is left to do is to choose a place to make a last stand.

- A **Battle** roll identifies a rocky outcrop as the most defensible spot in the area, although it is less than ideal. They may hold out for a short time, but there is little hope of escape.

Ask what preparations the company intend to make. Fire is a necessity, as the light is slowly dying; the company can also make **Battle** rolls to survey the terrain, or **Explore** rolls to find boulders to roll down on the Orcs, for example. For her part, Irimë stands on the rock and sings in Elvish, a high-pitched keening chant that sounds like a funeral dirge.

The Orcs Assemble

Instead of attacking straight away, the Orcs gather a short distance away in the gloom (just out of bow-range), and start their own yowling and shouting to drown out Irimë's song.

- The sight of so many Orcs requires a Fear test from each member of the company: failure to pass it will prevent a hero from invoking an Attribute bonus for the length of the fight.

The Orc-captain shoves lesser goblins aside and strides forward to issue a challenge to the company: *"Give us the elf-woman, and the rest of you can go!"* The company can ignore the Orc, reject his (false) offer, or make their own response. A sufficiently brave response, coupled with a successful **Awe** or **Battle** roll (TN 16) can intimidate the

Orcs as per the Intimidate Foe special combat task (see *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*, page 162).

The Assault

"Good! Tonight we eat man-flesh! Kill them all except the elf!" roars the Orc-captain, and he charges up the hill towards the company. A black tide of Orcs surges after him. The adventurers are outnumbered twenty to one, and all they can see is a wave of fangs and jagged swords and blood-shot eyes. But before battle is joined, something unexpected happens (read the following to the players):

> *Irimë raises her hand, and from the jewel of the ring she wears a bright light blooms, as if a star had uncloaked itself beside you. The blaze dismays the Orcs. Some turn and flee, and those in the lead must raise their shields to shade their eyes from the elf-light. The advantage is yours!*

While the Orcs seem terrified by the light, the companions feel heartened by the blaze: any companion who was daunted by a previously failed Fear test can now roll it again.

The Battle of the Hilltop

Irimë's blaze of light means the companions get to attack first, and gives them two bonus Success dice apiece to use during the coming battle (as for Combat advantages). But it does not stop the Orc attack. There is a host of Orcs here, far too many for the company to defeat. Each member of the company is engaged by multiple opponents, the precise nature determined by their chosen stance (see below).

- *Forward Stance:* One Black Uruk, two Orc soldiers.
- *Open Stance:* One Black Uruk, one Orc soldier.
- *Defensive Stance:* Orc soldier using a thrusting spear.
- *Rear Stance:* Goblin archers with bows of horn.

Each time an Orc falls, another takes its place. Appear merciless – evoke the feeling that the companions' doom is at hand. Use the following episodes as examples to set the pace:

- Three of the Uruks form a shield-wall and start marching up the hill, trying to force a wedge between members of the company and prevent the companions from fighting side by side. How do the adventurers break this shield-wall?

- One suicidally brave Goblin leaps over the front lines and attacks the rear guard. Who deals with this intruder?

- Another Orc carries a jar of some vile concoction; it looks like tar, but clings and burns without heat or fire. The Orc tries to hurl it into the face and eyes of one of the companions; if this Called Shot hits, the companion is blinded and Bewildered for the rest of the fight, and his vision is restored only with a successful **Healing** test.

Keep up this relentless assault until at least six rounds of combat have passed, or until two members of the company are Wounded or reduced to zero Endurance.

The Eagles

When it seems that all hope is lost and the company will soon be defeated, the defenders feel a wind rush by overhead, and they hear the beating of tremendous wings. The Orcs fall back in terror as a flight of gigantic birds swoops upon them from above! First Irimë, then any other wounded companions, and finally any who are still able to fight are picked up by the Great Eagles of the Misty Mountains. Other Eagles grab Orcs in their talons and fly off with them, then drop them from a great height to break on the rocks below.

The Orc captain roars to rally his troops: *"Stand and fight, you maggots! They're only feathery cows!"* He grabs a huge black bow and looses an arrow at one of the departing Eagles. The arrow flights straight and true, piercing the Eagle's breast. The bird does not fall, but its flight becomes more laboured.

The Eagles fly the company into the mountains. The flight would be terrifying if the company could see their surroundings, but in the darkness, all they can feel is the rush of the wind and the beating of the Eagles' wings. The bird carrying the companion with the highest Encumbrance makes several cutting remarks about the adventurer's weight and choice of armour, but all the Eagles manage to escape the hail of Orc-arrows and fly off into the night.

After a short but exhilarating flight, the Eagles bring the company to their eyries.

The Eagles are Coming!

As Tolkien himself remarked in several instances, the Great Eagles are a dangerous storytelling device. An intervention on their part can be easily seen as stripping the players of their chance to influence the course of the adventure. To avoid this feeling on the players' part, you could try to personalize the reasons for the intervention of the Great Eagles, exploiting any suggestions coming from the players themselves.

For example, is there a Dwarf in the company with a raven friend? The bird could have gone, or have been sent, in search of help, finding the Eagles. Or did a companion blow a horn before battle was joined, or made something that could be noticed? Did the heroes meet the Eagles before, or are they friends with Radagast? Even if the adventure provides a solid explanation for the episode as written, adding a modicum of player-driven elements can only improve the result.

- Part Four -
A Guest of Eagles

Dawn finds the company on a narrow stony ledge, high in the mountains. Companions who know the mountains well (or who have studied maps in Dale, Erebor or Hobbiton that showed Thorin's journey) might deduce they are not at the main eyrie of the Eagles, but at some other outpost nearby.

The Lord of the Eagles arrives shortly after they wake. With a wingspan of more than 100 feet, his arrival is a sight to behold. He lands on the edge of the platform, his dwarf-wrought golden crown glittering in the morning light. He addresses Irimë first of all, and she thanks him for heeding her prayers.

"We heard your song on the wind, but it was the light that guided us to you. Long has there been friendship between your kind and mine, and we came when we were needed."

Next, the Lord of the Eagles turns to the companions.

"Gaerthor, one of my chieftains, was grievously wounded as he rescued you from the Orcs. Tell me, whose lives did he buy with his courage?"

Meeting the Lord of the Eagles

In this encounter, the Lord of the Eagles' Tolerance is based on the highest rating in either Valour or Wisdom among the companions. It is reduced by one point for every companion with an Encumbrance above 15. It is increased by one point if the company felled more than six Orcs. As usual, keep a tally of the overall number of successes rolled by the players and compare the total with the entries given below to assess the outcome of the encounter, especially concerning the company's return to their journey.

Introduction

The Introduction stage can be handled with **Awe** or **Courtesy**.

Interaction

Offering to help the wounded Eagle requires a **Persuade** roll – the Lord of the Eagles is hesitant to trust outsiders (see *Healing Gaerthor*, below).

As far as the return of the adventurers to their journey is concerned, the Lord of the Eagles initially refuses to carry any companion whose Encumbrance rating exceeds 15, arguing that the weight is too great for his fellows to bear except in great need. He argues his point further, adding that he does not see why adventurers should walk around wearing all that iron (*"how will you ever fly, weighed down as you are?"*).

Arguing with the King of All Birds requires **Courtesy** or **Persuade** – or challenging the strength of his Eagles with **Inspire** or **Awe**. Exchanging news with **Courtesy** or **Riddle** gets the company an interesting perspective on recent events. The Eagle explains that something has stirred up the Orcs in recent weeks. The Lord of the Eagles cannot be persuaded to bring the company over the Mountains. He will not say why.

The encounter may yield the following results:

1: The Lord of the Eagles commands that the company be dropped off back on the main road. The adventurers face another day of march before they reach the pass.

2-4: The company convinces the Eagles to leave them higher up in the hills, closer to the pass (see *Part Five: The Ruins* below).

5-6: As above, but the Lord of the Eagles adds the following: on his more far-reaching flights, he has seen something in the West Nether Vales, a new fortress on the moors south of the River Gladden. He does not know what it is, but he dislikes it.

7+: As 2-3 and 4-6 above, and the Lord promises that if the companions call, he will come to their aid if they are within his reach: this lets the company call upon the Eagles once during the adventure while within fifty miles of the Eyrie.

Healing Gaerthor

If he agrees to let a companion attend Gaerthor, the adventurer faces a difficult challenge – removing the Orc-arrow requires a TN 18 **Healing** roll (the Virtue *Staunching-song* can be applied to the Eagle as well, by spending a point of Hope as usual). Succeeding at this feat gains the favour of Gaerthor: if called, the Great Eagle will come to the aid of the company once during the adventure (as for the "7+" entry above, but limited to Gaerthor only).

Departure

Once the company are ready to leave, Irimë bids farewell to the Lord of the Eagles, and the adventurers embark on a new flight. The journey down the mountain is more pleasant than the flight up, assuming one equates 'pleasant' with 'being able to see instead of flying blindly in the dark'. The company can see all of Wilderland laid out beneath them, like an astoundingly detailed map. In the distance, there is the shadow of Mirkwood, then there is the silver ribbon of the Anduin, its green vales, and then the towering wall of the Misty Mountains.

The Eagles drop the company off either on the road leading to the High Pass (one day away), or else half-way along, close to the spot where Irimë is to meet the riders from Rivendell (the Mountain ruins, see *Part Five* below), depending on the outcome of the encounter.

– Part Five –
The Ruins

Sooner or later, the company arrives at the ruins of an old town. If the companions played through *Of Leaves & Stewed Hobbit*, they recognise the tumbled stones as the place where they fought the Night-Wight. Irimë also remembers this place, but hers is a different memory.

"I have been here before. This was Haycombe, the trader's town leading to the Cirith Forn en Andrath. It was built by Middle-Men with golden hair who traded over the Mountains. They were a kind folk. They held a market here, and my kin from Lindon would come sometimes, and we would dance in the snow. The Men would laugh to see us run."

"They are gone, now. Some went South, with a brave chieftain called Eorl. Others stayed, until the shadow in the forest reached out and destroyed them. Treachery brought the enemy into the town, his horrors took the people here as slaves, and then there was no more laughter in the pass."

Irimë explains that this is where she is to meet the emissaries from Rivendell. She suggests that the company make camp here and rest. If the companions are worried about Night-Wights, then they can instead camp in a less comfortable but more defensible position in the surrounding hillside.

Twilight

Again, the evening draws in. Irimë does not sleep; instead, she wanders the hillside, following the unseen path of streets that were buried centuries ago. She steps lightly over snowfalls, remembering her vanished kin, and the lights of the market. As the stars come out overhead, she raises her voice in a song to Elbereth Starkindler.

- Neither she nor the company are aware of the coming danger. No mortal Look-out could give warning of what approaches them. Its Orcs having failed, the Gibbet King has left its refuge near the Gladden Fields and comes to attack Irimë directly. This is not a foe that can be fought with swords; it is a wraith-creature, a spiteful spirit, a thing of shadow.

If the company have a Look-out, then the first sign of the spirit is a feeling of unnatural coldness. This is not the chill of the mountain air, but the clammy cold of sickness. A shadow slithers through the night. Off in the distance, the Look-out sees Irimë glimmering softly, as if surrounded by a moonlit radiance – and then the shadow is upon her, suffocating her light. Irimë casts a single desperate glance back towards the sleeping adventurers... and then utter darkness falls upon the whole company.

Irimë's Dream

The next part of this adventure takes place in a dream of sorts. On one level, Irimë is struggling with the Gibbet King as it tries to consume her spirit. She is not strong enough to resist alone, so she is drawing on the companions to aid her. The companions experience this spiritual struggle as a dream-like state as they are all drawn into the wraith-world. (A close comparison for what is happening to them would be the Hobbits' experiences in the Barrow-Downs, where Merry dreamt of being a Man of the North who perished in battle with the forces of Angmar).

Set between Worlds

In the physical world, the companions are all asleep (also the adventurers who were on look-out or still awake for any reason). In the wraith-world, Irimë battles the spirit. Being mortals[1], the companions cannot perceive the wraith-world directly, and so they dream.

Time flows differently in dreams. Events may seem to take weeks or months, but only a few minutes pass in the waking world. Expenditures of Hope within the dream are real, as are Shadow point gains, but most Endurance losses or Fatigue gains vanish when a companion awakens. Similarly, wounds vanish when the dream ends. Any companion who is killed in the dream does not immediately awaken, but is instead trapped in a terrifying darkness for some time and then awakens with enough Endurance lost to make him Weary and a Shadow point

[1]Elves of Mirkwood are not mortals, but are of lesser 'spiritual stature' compared to a Noldo like Galadriel, Irimë or Glorfindel. Any Elf companions, or companions with a suitable Lore trait, may be able to recognise the dream for what it is, but cannot escape it.

gain (see also the *Slain Companions* sidebar on page 78). Telling other people in the dream that they are dreaming is futile, as is trying to wake up or to control the dream.

From time to time over the course of this dream, the Loremaster should describe how the companions sometimes glimpse the waking world. They stir in their sleep, and see Irimë wrestling with the spirit in the darkness, but then plunge back into the dream.

The Dream Begins

The companions awaken, exactly where they fell asleep, in the same positions on the mountainside. All their equipment and weapons are at hand. The mountainside, though, has changed. Where once there was an old and ill-maintained track, there is now a well-travelled road. Where once there were ruined walls and fallen stones, there is a town called Haycombe. While it is but a small town compared to the great cities of the South, it is a far larger settlement than any that exists in Wilderland today, save perhaps Esgaroth or Dale. It is protected by high walls of timber.

The company can hear the sound of laughter and the bustle of a market from inside the town, and it is clear that many travellers have gathered here. Entering the town, the companions are greeted by a crowd of tow-headed children, who swirl around them and start pestering them with questions: who are they? Where did they come from?

Exploring the town, the dreaming companions realise that every sight and sound feels familiar to them, as though they belong to this place and time. Should they address any villager they discover that they not only perfectly comprehend their language, but they speak it fluently too.

They are greeted warmly by the locals, who appear to be of the same stock as the Woodmen, although most seem to travel on horseback or else delight in feats of horsemanship; they are clearly horse-tamers and riders, and even refer to themselves as the *Éothéod*, the horse people. In the centre of town is a large square, where the market is held. The square is crowded with merchants, traders and travellers from across the North.

The Alehouse

A building stands out from other houses for the signboard swinging over its door, showing a scrawny goat falling down a cliff. The Falling Goat is an alehouse and inn, and offers the companions a good place to rest and consider what is happening. The place is not especially crowded when the companions arrive, as most people are at the market in the main square. There are four people in the alehouse who are of especial importance in the dream.

Aldor: The place has been run by Aldor since he started brewing ale for his neighbours many years before; today he is an old greybeard who has lived in the town all his life. He greets the companions as he hurries around the crowded alehouse. Aldor is a storehouse of tales, rumours and stories about Wilderland, both truthful and 'enriched' by his vivid imagination. He is an old man, the count of his years writ in wrinkles on his face.

> *"Welcome, welcome good sirs. Here for the market, no doubt. Sit, have a drink, and rest here a while. Have you come from the south? Any word of the Master's return? I've heard tell he's on the road, but news is hard to come by of late."*

Playing Aldor: Everything reminds you of something from your youth, or a story someone told you. Stroke your beard. Groan a little when you move; you're old.

Geb: Also in the alehouse is a wandering minstrel and trickster called Geb, a Woodman. A rogue and a charmer, he is drawn to any comely women among the company; failing that, he identifies the richest-looking companion and starts trying to wheedle money from them.

> *"Noble travellers, you look like the sort who'd have a coin or two to spare. It's good luck to pay a minstrel, you know. Give me a coin and I'll sing you a song of Scatha the Worm, and brave Fram the Dragonslayer!"*

Playing Geb: Never say what you actually feel; cloak everything in glib words. Let others take the risks; save your own skin if you have the chance. Smile and tell jokes; even when you are in grave danger, you can use morbid humour.

Haleth: One of the older children from the crowd outside keeps following the company wherever they go. This child of eleven years is named Haleth, and he dreams of being a warrior. He attaches himself to the most heroic-looking of the player characters.

> *"Have you a squire, sir? I could be your squire. I'd polish your armour and keep your sword sharp. My father is the captain of the Master's guards, and he's gone away South, but when he comes back I'm sure he'll tell you how brave I am."*

Playing Haleth: Don't be an annoying kid. Hero-worship the companions, but don't play him as a fool. Bergil son of Beregond (see The Lord of the Rings, V:1) is a good model to follow. Keep your eyes as wide as possible.

Rodwen: If the company seek out Elves (perhaps in the hope of finding a past version of Irimë), then they encounter Rodwen, an Elf from Mirkwood. She travelled west from the forest to visit the market as an emissary of King Thranduil. Unusually for her kind, she enjoys the company of mortals, and finds them entertaining.

> *"The shadow never truly departed our forest, and I do not know if the present trouble is but a passing darkness, or if some power has once again inhabited Dol Guldur."*

Playing Rodwen: Be fascinated by anything that mortals do. Take a detached perspective on events. Pause before speaking.

The Inn

The Falling Goat was originally Aldor's family house. It has a large common-room on the ground floor, with a half-dozen tables, benches and a blazing log-fire. Next to the common-room is a kitchen; off to the side are two private parlours. Upstairs, there are small sleeping rooms for guests.

Rumours in the Inn

Asking around with **Riddle** gets the company some sense of where – and when – they are:

- The lord of this people is named Heáfod; Woodmen and Beornings with the trait *Old lore* and Elves with *Elven lore* recognise this as a name out of Mannish legend, belonging to a time when a powerful Northman nation ruled the northernmost vales of the Great River.

- Many travellers have brought word of a new darkness in the great wood to the east. For many years, there had been a respite, and it was hoped that the shadow had departed Mirkwood. Recently, the tales claim, there has been smoke and foulness issuing from the Hill of Sorcery in Southern Mirkwood.

- Some months ago, the Alderman of Haycombe, one of Heáfod's most trusted followers, went on a journey south to survey the Hill of Sorcery, and to see for himself if there is any truth to these tales of a new shadow, but he hasn't returned.

Despite these rumours, the mood in the town is merry. While little trade comes over the mountains these years, the town still attracts merchants from the South. From these stories, and from the manner of the people, the company can work out that they are witnessing events that transpired some five hundred years ago. It is a good idea to have one of the companions stir in their sleep at this point, see Irimë and the spirit, and realise that not all is as it seems.

Fate of the Alderman

The Alderman of Haycombe was a victim of the Necromancer, who reclaimed Dol Guldur around the year 2460. When he travelled south with his retinue he was captured by the Necromancer and driven insane. His guards were tormented and murdered, and then raised again as undead warriors. Then, the Alderman was sent back with a contingent of Men from the East to destroy his town. The Necromancer had a deeper plan than mere malice – the destruction of the town would leave the High Pass unguarded and unprotected. With one hand, he removed Haycombe; with the other, he summoned Orcs out of Mound Gundabad to block the pass, and thus divide the North.

Return of the Alderman

Once the companions have had a chance to gather some information, and have met some of the other characters in the inn, they hear the sound of a commotion outside. From the shouts and excited conversation, they hear that the Alderman of Haycombe has returned from his journey south! The crowd outside is too thick to easily push through, so Haleth suggests the company watch the procession from the upper level of the inn, which overlooks the main square.

If the company do not already know, Haleth tells them that the Alderman of the town went away south some weeks ago, and is now returning. If the company shove through the crowd, or if they watch with Haleth from upstairs, they see the Alderman's caravan approach. At the head of the procession is the Alderman's golden wagon, accompanied by the guards he took South with him. He is followed then by a large number of men in strange red armour.

- As the procession grows closer, call for **Awareness** rolls from the company. Those who succeed have a growing sense of danger, as if disaster is about to strike. A great or extraordinary success lets a companion catch a weak breath of foul air coming from the caravan, the smell of things long-dead, along with the realisation that all the Alderman's guards have pallid skin, blank white eyes, and shamble rather than march.

The procession stops in the middle of the market square. The crowd draws in close to hear the Alderman of the town. The Alderman – a tall man, wearing an exceptionally fine torc of gold and well-made armour – stands and raises his hands. *"People of Haycombe! People of the North!"* he announces. *"Your true lord has returned!"*

And then the killing begins.

Siege of the Inn

The men in red armour are Easterling warriors. They are the first to strike: they attack with shocking speed, targeting any warriors within reach of their weapons. The guards of the Alderman are revealed for what they are: walking corpses, animated by dread sorcery. They attack the crowd, spreading panic like wildfire. Over the carnage, the companions can hear the insane laughter of the Alderman of the town.

Undead warriors stumble towards the inn; now is the time for swords! The companions are probably inside the alehouse, with Aldor, Geb, Haleth and others they might have met so far.

- **Barricading the Inn:** Companions who think to fortify the inn by blocking windows and locking doors gain two Success dice without needing to make a **Battle** test; the inn's walls are strong and this is a good place to hold out.

- **Battling the Undead & Easterlings:** There is a host of foes, too many to overcome. The first wave of attackers consists of undead warriors that lumber clumsily towards the company. The undead are ungainly, but are possessed of fearsome strength. Worse, wounding them is not always enough – they keep coming even after taking blows that would kill a mortal man.

If the company kill the undead (there are two undead warriors per companion), then the Easterlings join the fray. These savage men fight with pikes and long axes, and speak in a foreign tongue that sounds like a harsh bark to Northmen ears. If the company defeat some of the Easterlings, the others fall back and set the inn's roof alight. The company are then forced to choose between surrender and burning to death – no victory is possible here.

If a companion is reduced to 0 Endurance in this struggle, he momentarily wakes up and sees Irimë struggling with the spirit on the mountainside. Keep dropping references to the waking world into the dream when possible, to remind the players of their true situation.

Undead Warriors

Once young and valorous men, the guards of the Alderman have been stripped of their lives and will by the Necromancer's dark arts. Their shrivelled bodies are all that is left of them.

Undead Warriors:

Attribute Level	
3	
Endurance	Hate
15	4
Parry	Armour
3	2d
Skills	
Personality, 0	Survival, 1
Movement, 2	Custom, 0
Perception, 1	Vocation, 0
Weapon Skills	
Claw	2
Sword	1
Special Abilities	
Strike Fear	
Unnatural Vitality	*If the creature is wounded or down to zero Endurance, it may continue fighting by reducing its Hate point score by one point at the start of a combat round.*

Weapons:

Weapon Type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Claw	Attribute Level	9	12	-
Sword	5	10	16	-

Easterlings

These men are mercenaries from the plains to the distant East, drawn to Dol Guldur with promises of bloodshed and fortune. They fight with cruel pikes or long axes.

Easterling Warriors:

Attribute Level	
3	
Endurance	Hate
12	2
Parry	Armour
4	2d
Skills	
Personality, 2	Survival, 2
Movement, 2	Custom, 2
Perception, 1	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Pike or Long Axe	3
Special Abilities	
No Quarter	

Weapons:

Weapon Type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Pike	7	10	15	Break Shield
Long Axe	7		18	Break shield

Slain Companions

If a companion dies here, or later in Dol Guldur, the Loremaster has several options to keep the player in the game.

The player could temporarily take on another character, like Geb, Rodwen, Aldor or Haleth. There is no need for game statistics for these temporary characters. The character could awaken in the present day, and find his companions locked in a trance while Irimë battles the spirit. Optionally, you could present challenges for that companion, like keeping the entranced companions alive and warm when it begins to snow, or having goblins creep out of the hills and menace the helpless dreamers.

The Journey South

The dreaming companions are sharing the fate that befell the villagers of Haycombe almost five centuries ago: they are made prisoners by the Easterlings, and they find themselves chained together with the others – Aldor, Geb, Haleth and the Elf Rodwen – and forced to march south for many long days.

Along the hard march, those slaves who cannot keep up are whipped; those who fall are left to die where they lie. More than a thousand prisoners were taken in the sack of Haycombe, but less than five hundred survived the grim march south. The Easterlings drive the slaves quickly, and use long horse-leather whips when necessary, but they are not needlessly cruel. They do not torture their prisoners, nor make sport of them.

The days pass swiftly in the dream, like one moment of horror drawn out endlessly. Before the company know it, they have passed the Gladden Fields and are being driven south towards Dol Guldur. As the slave caravan passes the Narrows of the Forest, though, the Easterlings are met by a column of Orcs. The Easterlings leave the slaves in the tender care of the Orcs; the Men march east into the forest, while the Orcs whip the slaves south.

By the time Dol Guldur, the Hill of Sorcery, is in sight, all the companions have been made Weary, and the other prisoners are equally exhausted. Aldor, in particular, suffers from a terrible fever and wracking cough. The prisoners are driven into a dark tunnel that runs under the forest into the dungeons beneath the hill.

They vanish into darkness.

A Glimpse of Irimë

An Elf, or else the companion with the highest Wisdom, wakes for a moment and sees Irimë contending with the spirit. Irimë has the strength to whisper a warning to the character. *"A spirit of despair – it has entrapped us all in sorcery! It will consume us if we cannot defeat it!"*

– Part Six –
Dark Dreams

The company are thrown into a lightless, noisome pit, their weapons and gear taken from them, together with Aldor, Geb, Haleth and Rodwen. They must be deep beneath Dol Guldur, the dreaded fortress of the Necromancer. The cell is cold and partially flooded with foul water that stings the skin. There is a single door, locked from the far side, and opened only when the Orc-guards throw in a few lumps of mouldy bread or bowls of some grey gruel. In the distance, the companions can hear screams and the sounds of lamentation.

At times, from far below, the companions hear noises, as of some tremendous machinery. At other times, they feel unreasoning, unrelenting terror, a feeling of fear so overwhelming that they can do nothing but cower. The air is tainted, choked with smoke, or with caustic fumes. The companions now face foes that cannot be fought with force of arms, but are none the less deadly: sickness, fear and suffering.

- Call for Corruption tests now and after each of the following scenes. The TN for these tests starts at TN 10. If the companions are unable to keep their spirits up, then the TN for the Corruption tests rises with each test. Ask the players how their characters endure this endless darkness, and how they intend to stave off despair and madness. This is a time for skills like **Song** or **Inspire**, as well as the invocation of suitable traits and good roleplaying. The players should also include the other four prisoners – if the other prisoners succumb to despair, then it gets even harder to avoid corruption.

For example, a company of adventurers are trapped in the dream. The players decide that, as nothing here is real, they will just wait until they wake up. As they are doing nothing to keep their spirits up, the TN for the next corruption test rises to TN 12. Next, the Loremaster describes how Aldor is dying of a fever. The company manage to keep Aldor alive by getting the old man to remember happier days in lost Haycombe. The Loremaster decides that this counts as keeping their spirits up, so the third Corruption test stays at TN 12.

Escape?

Escaping the dungeons of the Necromancer is impossible in the dream: all the prisoners from Haycombe found their fate in Dol Guldur. The companions can try if they wish, and the first attempt counts towards keeping their spirits up. However, there is no way to succeed – even if they were to somehow overpower the Orc-guards, there are far worse things in these dungeons.

Aldor's Sickness

Old Aldor fell sick on the journey south, and barely made it to Dol Guldur alive. The old man is dying of a fever. If the company point his illness out to the guards, then the Orcs march into the cell and pour a vile brown-orange liquid down his throat that makes him convulse and vomit, but does not break the fever.

The only way to save Aldor is with **Healing** rolls. A prolonged series of four **Healing** rolls are needed to keep him alive. The TN for these tests is the same as the TN for the Corruption tests. Remind the healer that he must spend hours every day nursing a dying man. Aldor is going to perish anyway – why waste time on him?

Geb's Betrayal

The door to the cell opens, and a Woodman walks in bearing a tray of food. This is good food, not the gruel and Orc-bread the company has eaten for many weeks – meat and roasted vegetables and good ale. The Woodman is a tall and handsome young man who introduces himself as Annatar and offers food to the company.

"There's no need for you to suffer down here. The Master of this place has many Men in his service – aye, and Dwarves too, and other folk. Kneel to him, accept him as your lord, and you shall be given a place of honour in his service. Think on this offer, friends – it is better to live than to die, is it not?"

Annatar leaves the food for the company then departs, saying:

"I shall return tomorrow – give me your answers then."

Let the company debate the wisdom of serving the Necromancer. Of the other prisoners, Aldor is too weak to serve, Haleth refuses, and the Necromancer would never permit an Elf – even a Wood-elf – to live. However, the minstrel Geb is tempted by the offer.

"I don't want to die here in the dark, simple as that. What difference does it make who I kneel to, or what oaths I swear. Can you eat honour? Will valour keep you warm in this dungeon?"

The company can try to argue him out of serving with **Inspire** or **Awe**, or suggest that he put his talent for deception to good use and pretend to serve the Necromancer with **Persuade**. Again, the TN is equal to the TN for the ongoing Corruption tests.

Those Who Kneel

If a player character agrees to serve the Necromancer, that character gains 5 Shadow points immediately. The companion is taken from the dungeon cell – and remembers nothing more until the dream ends, except a dim memory of horrors and the feeling of being watched.

Geb the Servant

If Geb chooses to serve the Necromancer honestly, then the next time the companions see him in the dream, he is dressed in fine armour and is in the company of a band of other cruel guards. He never acknowledges his former cell-mates, and the light has gone from his eyes.

Geb the Trickster

If Geb chooses to serve the Necromancer, but is secretly planning to help the characters, then he can help them with a single task, like smuggling in medicine for Aldor. However, he is caught and executed shortly afterwards.

Haleth's Death

Orcs burst into the cell and point at the companion with the highest Valour.

"The lads want some sport. You're coming with us, slave!"

The companion is dragged out of the cell and a sack is pulled over his head. The Orcs pull him through endless corridors and forge-hot chambers until he is thrown onto a sandy floor. The bag is removed, and the companion finds himself on lying in the middle of an arena. A crowd of Orcs jeers at him from a ring of stone benches around the arena. On the far side of the ring is a portcullis. There is something behind it, something that snorts like a bull and moves like a lumbering mountain – a Hill-Troll!

One of the Orcs throws down a sword or other weapon to the companion. The portcullis cranks open, and the Troll emerges blinking into the firelight. When it scents the companion, it roars a challenge and slams its mighty fists into the ground.

The chances of a lone, unarmoured warrior defeating a Hill-Troll in single combat are remote, but let the companion try nonetheless. If the companion is wounded or knocked out in the fight, he is thrown back into the cell; if he dies here, he awakens from the dream. On the incredible chance that the companion beats the Hill-Troll, then the Orcs return the prisoner to the cell – skip right onto *The Spirit*.

After the fight, the Orcs return to the cell (possibly dragging the unconscious companion with them), and announce that it was so much fun, they are going to do it again tomorrow. One of the Orcs jabs a finger at the young boy, Haleth. *"You're next, boy! We'll be back tomorrow night!"*

Saving Haleth

The young man wanted to be a warrior, but he has never held a sword. The companions could spend the next few hours trying to prepare Haleth for what awaits him in the arena and teaching him the basics of combat. Alternatively, one of the other companions could volunteer to stand in for Haleth, if they can find a way of convincing the Orcs that the replacement offers more amusement than the sight of a boy being torn to pieces by a Troll. **Persuade** or **Awe** might work.

- If the companions choose to train Haleth, the teacher should roll **Battle** against the same TN as the ongoing Corruption tests. If successful, then the boy acquits himself well, and wounds the Troll in battle. Haleth dies, but he dies fighting bravely. On an extraordinary **Battle** success, he slays the Troll but is returned to the cell broken and dying. The Orcs return after the battle regardless of the outcome and throw the boy's body into the cell.

Awakening

By this time, any companions who have awoken see the first rosy fingers of dawn to the East. Irimë stands as she has stood all night long, locked in magical conflict with the spirit, but the frozen features of her face are flushed pink by the first light of the rising sun. The final phase of the struggle is at hand.

The Spirit

Back in the dream, the cell is suddenly filled with an eerie presence. An unearthly greenish light fills the chamber, and the companions see a thing of shadow looming over them. The spirit is vaguely man-shaped, like a shadow cast on a wall, but its outline shifts and warps as it moves. The spirit lashes out with fingers of darkness and seizes the Elf Rodwen. It holds her up by the throat, and shakes her. Her features change – one moment, she is Rodwen, the next, Irimë.

The spirit speaks through the dead body of Haleth. The boy's broken, bloodied lips and smashed jaw move, and a sepulchral voice echoes from his dead mouth, addressing the adventurers.

"Do you know what the Noldor-witch has done? She dared not face me alone, so she dragged you into this dream to defend her. This has ever been the way of the High Elves – to use others as their pawns! They despise the race of Men, fearing your growing strength. They hate the Dwarves, and are jealous of your craft. Even their own kin they do not trust. I am more merciful than she. Leave her to her fate. Deny her, here and now, and you may awaken."

Any companions who deny Irimë instantly awaken from the dream, but gain three Shadow points.

The Final Challenge

Those who do not deny Irimë remain in the dream. *"Share her fate then!"* hisses the spirit through Haleth's corpse. Utter darkness crashes down upon them: *"Despair!"* commands the spirit.

The following test is to determine whether Irimë prevails over the Gibbet King or is conquered by desperation. The difficulty of the roll depends on how well the companions have managed to endure the torments of the dream; the starting Target Number for the test is the same as the Corruption test TN, and is modified as follows:

- Add +2 to the TN if Aldor is dead.
- Add +2 to the TN if Geb betrayed the company.
- Add +2 to the TN if Haleth did not die bravely.

One player is called to make the test: he or she may roll the Feat die plus one Success die for every companion who is not Miserable and is still dreaming. If the company still has points in their Fellowship pool, they may spend one point as Hope to invoke a Heart attribute bonus, adding to the roll the highest basic Heart rating in the group.

If Irimë fails

The companions find themselves back in the waking world. A cloud passes in front of the rising sun, casting a shadow over the Mountains. Irimë collapses to the ground, unconscious. Her skin becomes pale and wan, and her eyes are blank and lifeless. All her power is gone. The spirit was victorious. It flees the High Pass before the sons of Elrond arrive, carrying its prize back south to its hidden fortress.

If Irimë succeeds

The companions find themselves back in the waking world. They see Irimë standing before the rising sun. A shadowy horror hangs in the air, lashing her with fingers of darkness, but she is unafraid. She lifts her hand, and it is as though the dawn shines through her fingers. The spirit wails and vanishes as the morning breaks over Wilderland.

– Part Seven –
Dawn in the West

At the breaking of dawn, a company of travellers approach from the west, led by two Elf-Lords who are alike in appearance and garb, dark-haired, grey-eyed, elven-fair, clad in bright mail beneath cloaks of silver-grey. These are Elladan and Elrohir, the sons of Elrond.

Irimë failed

If the spirit defeated Irimë, then Elladan races to her side. He presses the cold steel of his vambrace to her lips, to see if she still draws breath.

"What has happened here?" he asks. "She still lives, but all her strength is gone from her."

When the company explain the events of the dream, he nods in understanding.

"An evil spirit assailed her, and she was unable to defeat it. Her body is here, but her mind wanders a dark labyrinth and may never return. We shall take her to my father's house, where she may find healing."

The two brothers place Irimë's unconscious form on a horse, and turn back for Rivendell. One of the other Elves stays to bid farewell to the company, and to offer them help and healing if they need it.

Irimë succeeded

Elladan and Elrohir rush up to Irimë's side. They explain that they sensed a dark presence, and came as quickly as they could. Irimë assures them she is safe.

"A spirit attacked us in the night. Some ghost out of Dol Guldur, perhaps. It tried to destroy us..." She smiles at the companions for the first time. "But it seems there is still strength and fire in the hearts of the Free Peoples. These companions aided me in my struggle, preserving hope when all hope seemed lost. I spoke truly when I said our meeting was ordained by the stars."

She tells the company that she will continue on to Rivendell, and urges them to bring word to the Wizard Radagast of their experiences.

"The spirit was driven off, not destroyed. I did not think such evil things were abroad in this age of the world, but I was wrong. Darkness is coming, I fear, and I have not the strength to fight again. I go into the West, but I leave you with my blessing, for what it is worth."

The Lady bestows her blessing upon all the companions who impressed her during their first meeting (see page 68) and upon those who distinguished themselves in the wraith-world: from now on they will be recognised as *Elf-friends* and may employ the term as a new Trait (they can add this to the list of their Distictive features).

Elf-friend

...I see you are an Elf-friend; the light in your eyes and the ring in your voice tells it.

All benevolent creatures of any kind, including birds and animals, recognise you as a friend of all Elves and as a sworn enemy of the Shadow.

The Journey Home

The path down the mountainside is eerily familiar – the company travelled this way before, when they were chained prisoners in the dream. When they pass the ruins of the market town, they remember the buildings as they once were, and can almost hear the laughter of the children in the streets.

Whether it was defeated or victorious, there is no sign of the spirit or its Orc servants. They have fled away south – and finding them is another tale. For now, the company's path lies east, to Rhosgobel or some other destination. The Road leads ever on...

Fellowship Phase

Although it is many leagues away, the company may travel to the halls of the Elvenking and claim a more mundane reward there. Galion promised that Thranduil would recompense the adventurers for their efforts in protecting Irimë.

- If Irimë survived the journey, then Thranduil gives them 3 points of Treasure apiece, and they may stay in his halls during the Fellowship phase. If Irimë perished, then they get a single point of Treasure each, and the Elvenking's hall is not a welcoming place for them.

If allowed to remain, the company can *Open a new Sanctuary* at Thranduil's halls, or try to gain Thranduil as a patron. This is also an excellent place to *Heal Corruption*.

- a Darkness - in the Marshes

- **When:** The company may undertake this quest at any time in any year from 2946 onwards. However, it works best as a sequel to *Those Who Tarry No Longer*.

- **Where:** The adventure begins at Rhosgobel. The Wizard Radagast has learned of a strange threat in the west; he sends the companions to Mountain Hall, hoping that the Woodmen know more. From there, the company travels into the marshes of the Gladden Fields.

- **What:** News has come to Radagast of a growing danger somewhere west of the Great River. The Orcs who attacked the Lady Irimë were in league with this mysterious threat, as were the outlaws who attacked the land of the Beornings in *Kinstrife & Grim Tidings*.

- **Why:** Radagast fears – correctly – that some evil driven out of Dol Guldur has taken root across the Great River. If this threat is allowed to fester, the Shadow over Mirkwood could spread to encompass all of Wilderland.

- **Who:** The Wizard Ragadast is the primary patron for this adventure; the company also meet the head of the House of Mountain Hall, Hartfast son of Hartmut.

Adventuring Phase

This adventure is divided into eight parts.

Part One - Wizard's Counsel

The company meet with Ragadast in his home at Rhosgobel, where the Wizard explains his concerns and asks the companions to investigate.

Part Two - Across the River

The company travel from Rhosgobel to Mountain Hall. Along the way, they spy traces of the enemy's movements.

Part Three - The Harrowed Hall

The company arrive at Mountain Hall, and meet with Hartfast, the chieftain. He has his own troubles with Goblin attacks, and can spare little time for the company's questions. He does point the company towards the Gladden Fields, saying that some of his hunters have spoken of strange sights in that unpleasant land.

Part Four - The Passage of the Marshes

The company travel through the noisome swampy terrain of the Gladden Fields. After several days of arduous travel, they find eerie ruins atop a stony hill.

Part Five - Slave & Hunters

The company meet an escaped slave and battle the Orcs who hunt him. He relates his tale, and reveals the location of a secret route into the fort.

Part Six - By Secret Ways

The company enter the fort by a secret passage and spy on the enemy. They learn that the enemy's plans involve a powerful and ancient relic.

Part Seven - Fly, You Fools!

The company are discovered and must fight their way out of the fort. They are pursued across the Gladden Fields and the vales of Anduin to Mountain Hall. The company must stay ahead of the Orcs for as long as they can.

Epilogue - The Shadow of the Future

Returning to the fort, the company discover that the enemy has withdrawn from its fastness. The company must have discovered the enemy before he was ready to reveal himself...

Following On...

If your company played through *Those Who Tarry No Longer*, then they are the ones to bring the news to Radagast. Otherwise, Ragadast learns of the potential threat through his own spies, and summons the companions to help him.

- Part One -
Wizard's Counsel

The adventure begins at Rhosgobel, the small village of the Woodmen that has grown up around the house of Radagast on the edge of the wood. The Wizard's cottage lies a short distance away through the trees, but it can only be reached when the Wizard wants visitors. For some days, the company has rested here in the great long hall of the Woodmen, waiting for the Wizard's summons. The Woodmen are slightly concerned – Radagast has admitted no visitors in several weeks, and while long periods of isolation are not uncommon for the Wizard, it has been some years since he was so secretive.

The summons comes one evening, as the dusk draws in. A bushy-tailed red squirrel leaps from tree to tree, then lands on the roof of the hall and scurries along the supporting pillars before it drops down in front of the company. It bows in the manner of a courtier, and beckons the company to follow it. The company notice it has a golden chain around its neck.

Following the squirrel brings the company along a path of crushed white stones that the companions tried to follow previously but didn't seem to lead anywhere. The path winds its way through the woods, travelling alongside the sharp-thorned brown hedge that protects Rhosgobel from the wild woods beyond, and brings the company to a small cottage in a little clearing. The lights of the cottage are warm and welcoming as the night draws in. A horse eats grass contentedly in the field beside the house.

The squirrel runs ahead of the company, climbs up the wall, and rings a little bell by the door. The door swings open of its own accord. *"Come in, come in,"* says the voice of Radagast.

The Wizard

The cottage is crammed with all sorts of stuff - the gifts of generations of grateful visitors and villagers, from painted earthenware to travelling gear, to jars of herbs and spices. There are cages containing sick or wounded animals, casks of wine, moth-eaten blankets, framed woodcarvings piled against one wall, a teetering pile of scrolls, a writing-desk that overflows with parchment, letters and notes, and any number of birds hopping in and out of the window or roosting in the thatched roof.

Inside, Radagast sits in a comfortable-looking chair, wearing a ratty brown robe. He looks exhausted and weatherbeaten, but an energetic spark still animates his dark eyes. A simple supper of bread, cheese, jams and fruits is spread out on the table – there is enough for the whole company. Radagast insists that the company eat first, before he moves onto the reason he called them here.

Set Tolerance

Radagast values Wisdom, so the Encounter's initial Tolerance is equal to the highest Wisdom in the group. Add on the Standing rating of any Woodmen in the party.

Evaluating the outcome of the Encounter

As for other relevant encounters presented in this guide, the Loremaster can evaluate the outcome of the encounter by keeping track of how many successful rolls are scored by the player-heroes. The final total will be used to gauge Radagast's willingness to aid the company with his magic (see *Interaction* below).

Introduction

Radagast has little time for social graces, but at the same time he is not impressed with tales of heroism either. Using either **Awe** or **Courtesy** individually in this situation is a mistake and will count against them – all the company need is a spokesman to give their names.

Interaction

Radagast begins by explaining what he needs from the company.

"News – well, rumour and wild stories - has reached me of late. There is talk of Orcs moving across Wilderland, of evil things stirring up, of disquiet and sorrow and all manner of unpleasant things. This news comes from all quarters, but mostly from the west."

"I was so concerned that I sent word south to the head of my order, Saruman the White, who is wise beyond all others. He said that the best thing to do would be to act quickly and quietly, and with caution. My intent is to send you in search of the root of these stories. Your mission is to gather information and report back – learn all you can, but do not reveal your presence to the enemy!"

"I think the best place to start is Mountain Hall, the main settlement of the Woodsfolk west of the Great River. Hartfast is head of the council of Elders there – he is a good man, very sensible, and little happens in the vale of Anduin that does not escape his notice. Ask him for news."

Likely questions from the company are listed below, together with the Wizard's response.

What are we looking for?

"As you may know, some years ago, the Necromancer was driven from Dol Guldur. He could be back – and if it is him, then you must be very careful indeed. He is a foe beyond any of you, and beyond me too for that matter."

"More likely, though, the withdrawal of the Necromancer means that some evil thing, perhaps one of his servants, is trying to fill the void he left. We forced the Necromancer to leave, but there are any number of Orcs, spirits and mean-spirited men in the lands around Dol Guldur who would obey a new overlord."

"So, you are looking for... well, I don't know. Something evil. With luck, it is just some bandit, with less luck, a new Great Goblin. If I knew what it was, I wouldn't be sending you, would I?"

What is our reward?

"Reward? What, like gold and treasure and magic swords? Don't be absurd. You shall have the gratitude of all living beings in Wilderland, and that is worth more than silver or precious stones."

If it is the Necromancer, wouldn't he come back to Dol Guldur?

"The Hill of Sorcery is watched by many eyes. No, he will not return to that fortress until he is secure in his power. I think whatever this enemy is, it has yet to build its full strength. We must root out this weed of evil before it grows!"

Why Mountain Hall?

"Most of the recent troubles that have plagued the land happened west of the Great River. The hall is the only safe haven in that area and east of the Mountains for many leagues."

What help can you give us?

"There are any number of things I might work on you, but I'm not sure if they would help you or hinder you. Say I put a spell of concealment upon you – that will help you hide from Orcs and men and beasts, but it would make it easier for... other things to sense you. If I put a spell or two on you, then I am writing 'these are friends of Radagast' across your faces in letters of sunlight that can be read by anyone with the wit to read them. Still, I will leave it up to you – if you'd prefer to risk a little magic, in the hopes that whatever you find is just a dumb brute and not one of the Necromancer's horrors, then you shall have it."

If the companions ask for a spell, then Radagast offers them a choice of magical boons. Compare the total number of successful rolls the company achieved along the encounter with the entries given below.

1: Radagast has changed his mind, he won't risk any magic on the company: in his opinion these adventurers should try not to catch the attention of anyone who might take notice...

2-4: Radagast promises he will work his magic: he will give them one magical boon.

5-6: As 2-4 above, but he may be convinced to give up to two magical boons.

7+: As 2-4 and 5-6 above, but he may be convinced to give up to three magical boons.

Radagast's Magical Boons

The following list contains some examples of the type of magic that Radagast may employ to assist the company in their quest. While the number of boons depends on how the encounter turned out, the precise choice depends on the Loremaster, even if the adventurers might have attempted to influence Radagast advancing specific requests (for example, *"Can you hide us from the eyes of our enemies?"* or *"Can you help us to endure the journey?"*).

Beast Protection

The Wizard promises he will tell his animal friends to assist the company. When the company leaves, every animal will keep an eye on their progress until the end of the adventure.

- For the length of the adventure, all companions benefit from a free Attribute bonus on all their **Awareness** rolls.

The bonus is granted as animals send warnings to the companions whenever danger is near: birds sing wildly or stop singing all of a sudden, a thrush starts flying about the companions' heads to catch their attention, a hart jumps in the middle of their encampment turning its head in the direction of the enemy, etc.

Spell of Concealment

When the company leaves his presence, Radagast places a spell of concealment upon them.

- For the duration of the adventure, all companions benefit from a free Attribute bonus on all their **Stealth** rolls.

Travel Blessing

Radagast casts a spell on the company's boots (or Hobbit feet!).

- For the length of the adventure, all companions benefit from a free Attribute bonus on all their **Travel** rolls (including Fatigue tests).

Storm Bag

Radagast digs up a battered leather pouch with a waxed black drawstring. The pouch is oddly warm to the touch.

- If the pouch is opened, it seems empty and the warmth disperses, but within minutes a tremendous thunderstorm appears. The storm brings dark clouds, high winds and torrential rain (or snow, if opened in winter or in the mountains). The bag only works once.

Mirkwood Cordial

Radagast gives the company a flask of a powerful alcoholic beverage, enough for six sips of the thick liquid. He accompanies the offer with a warning: *"Beware, as this liquor has been distilled from rare herbs I picked deep in the forest of Mirkwood. Remember, one sip at a time."*

- Sipping from the flask once a day restores a number of Endurance points equal to the drinker's favoured Heart's score plus the roll of a Success die. Drinking two sips or more in the same day restores Endurance proportionally but induces a stupor making a character *Miserable* for 24 hours for each sip after the first (this means that the drinker may now fall prey of a *bout of madness*, see page 225 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*).

Leaving Rhosgobel

Once Radagast tires of the conversation, he announces that it is time for bed. The companions can sleep in the spare rooms of his cottage – and although the cottage looked like it could only contain one or two rooms from the outside, the company find there are just enough bedrooms for all of them. Radagast does not sleep that night, as he has been away from home for several weeks and needs to catch up on news from the animals who watch Dol Guldur. The company see him walk away into the forest and vanish.

The Wizard does not return the next morning. The company are woken by the dawn chorus of birds in the thatch, and can break their fast on the leftovers before departing.

- Part Two - Across the River

A Woodwoman named Banna greets the company on the forest's edge. She is tall and gangly, and while her features could not be called pretty, there is a merry glint in her eye. She says that Radagast asked her to accompany the companions to the River, where they can take boats upriver and then travel west to Mountain Hall.

Banna

Banna is one of Radagast's aides and messengers. She is eternally optimistic and positive, and loves tramping through the forest and the vales of Anduin more than anything else. She is curious about other folk, but has no desire to leave the lands she knows and loves – maybe one day, when she has seen all the forest and walked every valley from the Forest Gate to the Mountain Pass, but not yet. While she is a good shot with a bow and can handle a knife, she only fights in defence of her homeland. She knows little about the outside world, but knows everything about the lands of the Woodmen, down to the smallest piece of gossip or the best-hidden path through the woods of the Western Eaves.

Playing Banna: Be cheery and upbeat. Ask questions of any companions who are not Woodmen or Beornings; Banna has never seen a Dwarf or a Hobbit, or even a house that was made out of anything other than wood. Tilt your head as if listening to the wind every few minutes. Address animals as 'Master Rabbit, Mistress Cow, Lord Bear' and so on – treat them as people.

Banna will not accompany the party west of the Anduin, but can show up in future adventures as a guide or messenger. Banna has a **Travel** score of 4, if the company wish to use her as their guide.

The Journey

The first leg of the journey will see the company travel from the western eaves of Mirkwood to the Great River. The second leg has the companions paddle against the current along the River Anduin to a landing spot chosen by Banna. The third leg brings the company from the Great River to Mountain Hall.

- The 60 miles trip from Rhosgobel to the River Anduin is done across open terrain in Border lands, taking no more than three days and a single Fatigue test (TN 14).

- The journey upriver is long, some 40 miles by boat, taking between four and eight days depending on the weather and how hard they row (see below). The Anduin is especially fierce during the early spring and summer, when meltwater from the mountains feeds the streams, but late summer and early autumn are more pleasant (remember to require a number of Fatigue tests appropriate to the season and the length of the journey).

- The journey from the Great River to Mountain Hall is more than 80 miles across pathless areas and hills in Border lands, taking six days and one or two Fatigue tests (TN 14), depending on the season.

Planning the Route

As usual, the companions may make preliminary rolls for the journey. Banna knows most of the way, though, so the company may choose to listen to her. Listening to Banna's directions lets all companions enjoy a free Attribute bonus on their Lore rolls.

Alternative Routes

Banna's suggested route is the easiest, but not the only option. The company might choose to cross the Great River by boat to the west of Rhosgobel, then head north-west across the Nether Vales or even through the Gladden Fields. Alternatively, they could take the boats up the Gladden River. Both routes are much harder, but bring them closer to the Dwimmerhorn; optionally, you could skip Part Three and jump right to Part Four or Five if the company choose the harder road.

From Rhosgobel to the Great River

Banna leads the company northwest, to reach the river north of the Gladden Fields. The travelling is pleasant, and they swiftly leave the forest behind to march across the green fields that slope down towards the River. Banna brings the company to where the Woodmen have cleverly hidden some boats in a little coppice overlooking the River.

Hazards Suggestions

The company should encounter few hazards worth mentioning; the worst threat is inclement weather, like a rainstorm or an unusually hot sun.

Up the Anduin

Assuming the companions follow Banna's planned route, then the next part of the journey involves paddling upriver, to the point where Banna will bid the company farewell after dropping them on the western shore.

The companions must all make an **Athletics** test against TN 12 (raise the TN by two in spring): if more than half their number pass the test, the journey upriver takes four days. Otherwise, they struggle against the current and spend six days paddling northwards. If all the companions fail the test, the journey takes eight days.

The Gladden Fields

The first day of the boat journey is the worst, as the company begin quite close to the Gladden Fields. There, the river is cloaked in a thick mist, and the company are beset by buzzing flies and mosquitoes. Banna insists

that the going is easier later on, and she is proved right, as the mist gives way to clear skies.

If there are any Hobbits in the party, she points to lines of small hills by the river-banks. Her grandmother told her stories of a fairy folk who lived in holes under those hills, long ago, and who could vanish from the sight of Men at will.

Hazards Suggestions

Here follow suggestions for Hazards that are potentially encountered on the River:

Lost in the Fog (Scout - Despair)
The boats become separated from each other in the fog. One boat is on its own until the companions on board find their way back to the rest: on a failure, the Scout loses a point of Hope (or 2 Hope on an).

Strong Currents (All Companions - Fatigue)
The river is fast-flowing today; the companions must make a Travel roll or add Fatigue again (twice if they roll an).

Things that Crawl and Sting (Any Companion - Strain)
One member of the company is attacked by blood-sucking bugs. A **Healing** roll is needed to prevent that character losing Endurance equal to a Success die roll.

Perilous Rapids (All Companions - Strain)
One of the boats bounces off a rock and is overturned. The companions on that boat must succeed in an **Athletics** test to quickly swim ashore or lose Endurance equal to a Success die roll.

From the Great River to Mountain Hall

The third part of the journey is the longest and most perilous. Before she departs, Banna suggests that they travel due west, skirting the woods, and to follow the mountain stream until they reach the Hall. The terrain on the west bank is tougher to navigate, with fewer known trails. In places, the company must struggle up rocky slopes, or navigate tangles of gorse and thorny plants. Around half-way through the journey, the company may be lucky enough to find a well-worn path, used by travellers coming from the Old Ford who are going to Mountain Hall.

Hazards Suggestions

This road to the Mountains is dangerous, and the Gladden Fields are near. The following examples may be used to set up an appropriate Hazard episode.

Landslide (Scout - Strain)
One of the company risks a small rockslide in the scree-covered foothills of the Misty Mountains. The Scout must make an **Explore** test to notice the danger; if this test fails, then pick one companion to make an **Athletics** test. If the companion succeeds, he avoids causing a rockslide. If he fails, he loses a number of Endurance points equal to the roll of a Success die, and the sliding rocks cause a chain reaction, forcing everyone else to make a similar **Athletics** test to avoid damage.

Wolves (Scout, Huntsman or Look-out - Dangerous Meeting)
A pack of Wild Wolves follow the company. They do not dare attack a group of armed humans, but might pick off a lone Scout or Huntsman, or creep close to the campfire at night to attack a sleeping victim (stats for Wild Wolves are found on page 246 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*).

- Part Three -
The Harrowed Hall

The fast-flowing river waters that protect Mountain Hall (see *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*, page 266) are icy cold as they tumble down from the snowy heights of the Misty Mountains. The waters churn and cascade around the hall, surging down a gully that was shaped and widened by many years of craft. The hall has no protective hedge or walls – it needs only the river and the cliffs. A narrow bridge crosses the river, leading to the knot of outbuildings and storerooms at the front of the hall. Behind the long hall itself, a watchtower rises as if in imitation of the towering peaks around. When the companions approach the bridge, they are challenged from the other side by the doorkeeper of Mountain Hall, old Beranald.

"Stay where you are, strangers. Your journey has led you here to seek our hall. I see you are warriors. I must ask who you are, in the name of Hartfast, head of the House of Mountain Hall."

A pair of guards cross the bridge to hear the company's answers. If there are any Woodmen with a Standing of 2 or more who will vouch for the rest of the company, they can cross freely. Otherwise, the company must make a **Courtesy** roll to be allowed entrance to the hall, and must give up their weapons to the keeping of Beranald (see below).

The company are given a simple meal of bread, cold water and grey mutton. If they ask to see Hartfast, they are escorted up the hill past the watchtower to a cave entrance.

Mountain Hall

1. Narrow Bridge: This bridge is the only easy crossing over the fast-flowing river. North and west of Mountain Hall, the river cuts through a steep gorge; east of the hall, the river clings to the sheer slopes of the mountains on one side, and is too swift and cold to ford. The Woodmen have fortified this river over the years by placing sharpened stones along the west bank to further dissuade trespassers. There is a hidden boathouse several miles east that marks the uppermost point at which the river is navigable.

2. Approach Road: This ramp is the only way into the hall. It cuts back and forth across the mountainside, and at its narrowest is wide enough only for a single cart. The ramp is lined with carved stones to ward off enemies and evil spirits.

3. Doorkeeper's House: Here dwells Beranald, the doorkeeper of Mountain Hall. Woodmen of good Standing may be allowed keep their weapons, but all other visitors must leave their swords and other weapons here in Beranald's care.

4. Great House: This high-ceilinged building is the heart of the settlement. It has walls of timber and is kept warm by three huge fire-pits. One fire is kept burning at all times of the year, and the Woodmen believe that if this fire ever goes out, doom will befall their hall.

5. Trading Post: This is a trading post where furriers, hunters and farmers may barter for the work of the forges and the mines. Adventurers may also acquire supplies here.

6. Mine Entrance: At the back of the village is the entrance to one of the mines worked by the mountain folk. There are three other mines farther up the gorge, and another two mines over the mountains.

7. The Burg: This tall tower was raised by a great chieftain of the Mountain Folk. His daughter, said to be the most beautiful maiden ever seen in Wilderland, cast herself from the top of the tower when her lover was slain in battle with Dwarves. Her body was never found; one story claims that the remorseful Dwarves found her and placed her drowned, half-dead body in a crystal coffin, where she sleeps until her lover returns from beyond the land of the dead.

8. Hartfast's House: This large house is the home to Hartfast son of Hartmut, head of the House of Mountain Hall. It is always busy and full of life; Hartfast sired five sons and seven daughters, and has more grandchildren than he can remember or bother to count.

The Mine

The entrance leads into one of the mines that worm their way into the Mountain's roots. By the standards of the Woodmen, these are extensive excavations – to a Dwarf, they are a child's idle scratchings. The Woodmen kindle torches made from rushes, and bring the company down into the mine. The walls and floor are slick with water, and icy drops fall from above. The torchlight makes the walls glitter.

These mines mostly dig useful metals out of the ground – copper and tin and iron primarily, but they have found some gold here too. It has long been the dream of the mountain-folk to strike *Mithril*, the fabled Moria-silver, but they have yet to do so.

The tunnels wind on and on, and the company descend several flights of stairs until they come to a larger cave. There, four burly mountain-folk stand with their ears pressed against the far wall. One of these folk turns to greet the company. This is Hartfast, the chieftain of Mountain Hall.

Metting Hartfast, son of Hartmut

Hartfast looks like the Misty Mountains; craggy features, absurdly tall, and a wild shock of white hair. Golden amulets are braided into his grey beard. He has seen more than fifty winters here in the mountains, but he is yet unbowed. He does lean on a stout walking stave more than he used to, but he can still swing an axe or draw a bow with the best of his grandsons. He is a proud man, and has little time for outsiders – not even the other Woodman tribes are truly welcome here. It is a long way

across the River to Woodland Hall, and Hartfast considers them distant cousins at best. Behind his back, the other Woodmen call him the 'tallest dwarf' for his stubborn pride and standoffishness.

Playing Hartfast: Stand and look down on the players. Demand respect. Have no patience. Use silence as a weapon. Don't talk unless you have something to say, and let foolish statements hang in the air.

When the companions first meet him, Hartfast scowls at them, and brusquely demands that they explain their presence in his mountain fortress.

Set Tolerance

Hartfast values Valour. He mistrusts Elves and the folk of Dale, and has no time for Hobbits; if any such companions are in the company, reduce his Tolerance by one. Add the Standing of any Woodmen to his Tolerance, and increase it by one if there are any Dwarves in the party.

Introduction

Using **Awe** is a mistake. The TN for such rolls is 16, as this is Hartfast's home and he has no time for arrogant visitors. (A successful **Insight** roll gives the company advance warning of this). The company should use **Courtesy** to introduce themselves.

Interaction

Trading news with **Riddle** is a simple task, as Hartfast is hungry for tidings from the outside, and is set at TN 12. Begging favours uses **Persuade** or **Courtesy** at TN 16. If the company hints about any threat from the lands to the west of the River Anduin, then Hartfast shrugs.

> *"Aye, there's something afoot down south, in the Gladden Fields. There's always trouble in those parts, around Dwimmerhorn. I pay it little heed – I've worries closer to home."*

Dwimmerhorn, he explains, is an old fort made by 'evil folk' that sits on a stony hillock in the marshes. At least, it usually does – Dwimmerhorn moves of its own accord, they say, and is never in the same place twice. It is said by the mountain-folk that the fort was built by servants of the Necromancer many years ago. It was abandoned by the enemy several times in the past, but it draws dark things to itself, and is never empty for long. From what he knows, it was somewhere in the western part of the Gladden Fields. Local hunters may know more. That puffed-up trapper Magric, for example, knows the marshes very well, even if he is too big for his britches.

If asked for more tales of Dwimmerhorn, Hartfast calls over another one of the greybeards, who says that the marsh fortress is atop a 'great black rock' and that there is only one way up, a narrow path that is watched by many eyes. The fort was always well protected. Orcs and worse things dwelt there, and it was reputed to be haunted. Tales speak of dungeons and treasures delved deep into the black rock below. Some say the rock fell from the sky.

Some of the hunters who come to Mountain Hall to trade have not been seen in several weeks. Maybe something happened to them in the marsh. If he had time and men to spare, then he would look into the matter, but he doesn't right now.

If asked about his 'worries closer to home', Hartfast beckons the company over and bids them put their heads against the stone wall. In the distance, echoing through the stone, they hear the tap-tap-tap of a hammer in the depths.

> *"Goblins", says Hartfast. "They dig in search of our mineshafts and tunnels. They want to find a secret way in to my hall. We've killed many on the surface, but they are more dangerous down here in the dark."*

A Dwarf can suggest useful strategies for dealing with underground combat with a successful **Battle** or **Craft** roll; Hartfast welcomes such advice, and would in fact pay to have a few Dwarves come to his hall for a few years to expand the mine and teach his followers the secrets of dwarven stone-craft.

If the companions ask for aid, compare the number of successful rolls they achieved during the episode (including the Introduction) with the entries given below.

- **1:** Harfast has no time, provisions nor men to spare. The companions are left to their own devices. They will be required to leave as soon as possible, and won't be offered provisions for the journey: they will have to hunt to provide their own food.

- **2-4:** Hartfast offers the company hospitality for several nights and supplies for the journey south.

- **5+:** Hartfast sees wisdom in the company's quest, and offers to find them a guide. If the company accepts, then will introduce them to a hunter named Magric (see Magric the Trapper on page 95).

Hartfast & the Dwarves

One potential follow-on from this adventure is for the company to act as intermediaries, bringing Hartfast's request to King Dáin of Erebor. The veins of ore beneath the Misty Mountains are very rich, and while the Dwarrowdelf is lost to Durin's folk, there are other mines to work.

However, both Hartfast and the Dwarves have stiff necks and do not share wealth easily. If the company pursue this quest, then they must later sort out disputes between Hartfast and the Dwarves who come to live in his hall, for both sides believe the other is cheating them of their rightful wealth. Treasure is ever the downfall of friendship between Dwarves and Men.

Night at Mountain Hall

After their encounter with Hartfast, the company can stay in the hall. Depending on how well-disposed Hartfast is to the company, they may get more grey mutton and stale bread in the common hall, or a hot meal and a real bed in the Great Hall.

A Rude Awakening

During the night, the companions are awoken by shouts of alarm from outside. If they rush outside, call for **Awareness** tests (TN 16, it is dark). Those who succeed spot a trio of Goblins scrambling up the steep mountain slope to the east of the hall!

The Goblins crept up into Mountain Hall from the mines at night and tried to set fire to the storehouse. They were discovered by two watchmen: they stabbed one, but could not prevent the other from sounding the alarm.

- The Goblins are deftly climbing the sheer mountain side and have too much of a lead to be caught, but an archer might attempt to pick them out with an astonishingly good shot - the feat imposes a daunting difficulty: TN 20!

Every archer can make only one attempt before the Goblins will be out of range. If the shot is successful, the Goblin is too surprised to react and falls to its death regardless of the damage inflicted.

- If the companions ask the surviving watchman about what happened, they discover that his companion was stabbed but is now nowhere to be seen.

Companions who didn't lose time in shooting the Goblins and who succeed in a Search roll at TN 16 find bloody tracks and discover that the wounded Woodman stumbled in the dark and fell over the cliff into the river to the north of the trading post: they are just in time to rescue him as he can be spied below as he clings with his remaining strength to the stony shore.

If the companions do not search for the missing watchman, or tarry too long to shoot at the escaping Goblins, the watchman's corpse is found the day after, among the rocks where the bridge crosses the river.

A Bitter Morning

The morning after, Hartfast visits the company and thanks them for their help, or asks them to leave at once, depending on what happened during the night.

- If the companions didn't inquire about the missing watchman, Hartfast shows them his body and asks them to leave at once, regardless of whether they killed any fleeing Goblins or not.

- If they ignored the fleeing Goblins and rescued, or at least searched for the watchman, Hartfast thanks them for their help and the concern shown for his folk. He provides food for the coming journey, even if he didn't offer to do so the night before.

- If they killed at least one Goblin and rescued the watchman, they are met with Hartfast's approval and gratitude. He offers food and a guide for the coming

journey (again, Magric, see below), and invites the companions to accompany him as he climbs the steps leading to the burg to behold the Horn of Warning before they take their leave (see the box, below). With this informal ceremony, Hartfast has recognised the companions as friends of the House of Mountain Hall.

The Horn of Warning

Inside the Burg, the stone tower overlooking the narrow dale, the Woodmen of Mountain Hall keep their greatest treasure: the great Horn of Warning. Carved from the tusk of a Cold-drake, it is a huge blowing horn, wrought with images carved by the hands of many skilled craftsmen. It hangs from the beams of the roof of the tower by means of two gilded chains. Legends say that whoever beholds the Horn of Warning will be able to hear its sound anywhere in the proximity of the Misty Mountains.

The company may depart the day after they arrive, or stay a while if Hartfast offered them hospitality.

Magric the Trapper

Tall, handsome and well-spoken for one of the Woodmen, it is said there is Elvish blood in Magric's family. He lives alone, hunting and trapping in the vales of the Gladden River. He comes to Mountain Hall each month or so to trade. He talks easily, laughs easily, and has an interest in all the doings of the wider world. Over the campfire, he is always curious about the homelands and the cultures of the people he travels with. He is an exceptionally skilled guide, and knows many travel songs to make the miles go quicker.

Secretly, though, Magric is a servant of the enemy. He was caught by Orc patrols in the marshes of the Gladden Fields and brought in chains to the Dwimmerhorn. There, he was threatened with torture, and he bought his freedom by agreeing to act as the enemy's spy. He justifies this betrayal to himself by claiming that he had no choice, and that he did what he had to do to survive.

Playing Magric: Joke and talk with the companions, but never mean it. Try to say exactly what you think the players want to hear. Subtly encourage the company not to worry and to trust in your guidance. Rub your wrists every so often, as if remembering the marks left by chains.

Travelling with Magric

When the company is travelling south with Magric, if any companion is curious about Magric's motivations and talks or observes the guide for some time, allow an **Insight** roll (TN 16). If successful, the character realises that there is something strange about Magric's behaviour, and that while he knows exactly where he is going, he is pretending to be unsure about their course.

Unless the company challenge Magric before this happens, he turns on the company in Part Five.

– Part Four – The Passage of the Marshes

The journey south from Mountain Hall to the Dwimmerhorn is a difficult one, as the company do not know exactly where the fortress is located. The journey is easier if the company have Magric guiding them.

The Journey

The first leg of the journey has the companions travel from Mountain Hall to where the Gladden River flows out of the Misty Mountains. On the second leg of their journey, the adventurers enter the marshes of the Gladden Fields, searching for the Dwimmerhorn.

- On the first leg of the journey, the company skirts the foothills of the mountains for nearly forty miles to the south, then heads east for another thirty along the Gladden River. It takes them five days and requires one Fatigue test.

- Once inside the Gladden Fields, the company trudges along for 20 miles of marshy terrain. The uncomfortable trip takes three days and another Fatigue test.

Planning the Route

As before, the companions are allowed **Lore** rolls to plan their journey ahead. If the companions let Magric guide them, all the companions enjoy a free Attribute bonus on their **Lore** rolls.

From Mountain Hall to the Gladden River

Travelling along the wolds and valleys of this district is easy enough, although the foreboding peaks cast long shadows over the land. In the warmer months of the year, great beds of iris and flowering reeds crowd the banks of the Gladden River.

Hazards Suggestions

Here follow suggestions helpful to set up one or more specific Hazard episodes.

Monsters Roused (Look-out - Dangerous Meeting)
Goblins and Wargs haunt these lands. The company may run into such creatures, or even a Troll or two on the hunt if they are very unlucky.

Hazardous Terrain (Guide - Fatigue)
Near the river, among the reeds are muddy patches of terrain riddled with holes where an unwary traveller might twist an ankle or break a foot. The guide can point these out with a **Travel** test; otherwise, one member of the company injures their foot, adding Fatigue again (twice if an ᚠ was rolled).

The Gladden River (All Companions - Weariness)
The river is thick with fish and golden flowers, but it is fast-flowing and treacherous if you try swimming in the wrong place this far west. Crossing the river needs an **Athletics** test or else the companion becomes temporarily Weary.

Into the Gladden Fields

The Gladden Fields are not the worst swamp in Middle-earth – these are not the Dead Marshes or the Long Marshes south of the Long Lake. But its tangled terrain can be confusing, as the company blunders from one watery hillock to the next, and the thick fogs that rise from the marsh may turn travellers from their path, but there are few mortal perils here... at least, outside the region around the Dwimmerhorn.

Hazards Suggestions

Potential hazards in the marshes could include the following:

Treacherous Footing (Any Companion - Wound)
One of the companions must make an **Athletics** test to avoid stumbling while crossing a patch of clinging weeds. If he fails, he slips into a snake den and one of the snakes strikes at him, burying its venomous fangs in his leg. This venom is not fatal, but it is exceedingly painful. The character loses Endurance equal to the result of a Success die. If they failed with the roll of an eye they instead suffer a Wound from the snake's bite.

Lost in the Fog (Scout - Fatigue)
The companion becomes separated from the rest, and must make an **Explore** roll to find the rest of the company. If the roll fails, the companion adds Fatigue again as they tire themselves out searching the fog.

Searching for the Dwimmerhorn

To reach their destination, the company must search the marshes. If they are on their own, their huntsmen and scouts are allowed to make two skill rolls each per day (using either **Hunting**, **Explore** or **Search**): the scouting of the area can be treated as a Prolonged action: when the companions have accumulated at least six successful rolls, they can be considered to have reached the Dwimmerhorn.

To enliven the search, a particularly good roll can yield a significant clue and assure the company that they are on the right track. Possible clues include:

- **A well-trod path:** A trail winds its way among the great rushes and tangled reeds of the marshy terrain. It seems to have been used recently.

- **An ominous sight:** The companions catch a glimpse of a distant dark rocky hillock. They succeed in heading towards it for a while, and then lose it in the rising fog; this happens multiple times, apparently giving the companions the uneasy feeling that the stories about the moving Dwimmerhorn might be true.

- **Orc-camp:** the adventurers uncover signs that Orcs have recently camped in the area; chewed bones and discarded remnants of food litter the area, the tall grass has been savagely trampled and small trees and plants hacked to pieces for no apparent reason.

If the company is guided by Magric, he leads them straight towards the fortress. Another possibility is to have the companions stumble upon a slave escaping its captors... (see the next chapter: *Slave & Hunters*).

- Part Five -
Slave & Hunters

As the company make their way through the marshes, have the Look-out men make **Awareness** tests. If successful, the company hear the sound of several foes crashing through the marsh, and the savage howling of hunting Wargs. A band of Orcs is bearing down on the company!

- If the company are travelling with Magric, then any companion who got a great success may also make an **Insight** roll; if successful, he notices that Magric paled when he heard the Orc-noise, and that their guide has fallen back to the rear of the company.

The Orcs will be here in moments – if the companion wish to prepare to ambush the enemy, they can make their rolls at TN 12, as the Orcs are not expecting to be attacked (see Ambushing Enemies on page 168 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*).

The Fight in the Marshes

A single figure stumbles into view through the willow trees. It's a Man, a Northman by his looks, dressed in rags and obviously in great distress. His hands are manacled together. His face is drawn and gaunt with months of starvation, and he is scarred from whippings and beatings. Close on his heels are the Orcs and their Wolves.

- As soon as the Northman appears, if Magric is with the company, he jumps in the open and runs towards the Orcs crying out *"Ambush! Ambush!"* His betrayal removes any chance for the company to surprise the enemy, and also robs them of any benefit due to combat advantages.

The Enemy

There is one Orc Soldier per companion, plus a Black Uruk and a pair of Wild Wolves. If Magric is present, then the company must also deal with their treacherous companion. The Orcs were expecting to be dealing with a lone escaped slave, not a party of doughty adventurers, so they are taken aback when battle is joined. The Uruk roars commands to the soldiers, ordering them to capture the company and not to fear *'a pack of farmers and elf-maggots!'*

Complications

The muddy ground is a bad place to fight. All companions are considered *moderately hindered* when attacking, meaning that all their TN to hit receive a modifier of +2. The enemy is not affected as they have spent a considerable amount of time in the marshes.

Fight Events

The Loremaster should read and consider the application of the following battle events at appropriate moments.

The Orc-Horn

If the Uruk or half the Orc Soldiers are slain, one of the Orcs spends his round blowing his horn wildly.

- Use the Orc Soldier's Vocation skill: if the Orc gets a great success or an result, then another band of Orcs have heard his call. This second band of Orcs, identical in number to the first, arrives within six Combat Rounds.

Act of Desperation

The escaped slave leaps to his feet and wraps his manacles around the neck of one of the Orc Soldiers.

- The throttled Orc slumps to the muddy ground, dead.

Magric's Cowardice

If the Orcs are losing, then Magric flees the battle, running north. He knows the marshes well, and can escape the company. He shall return in Part Eight of this adventure.

After the Fight

Once the Orcs are defeated, the company can tend to their wounds and the wounds of the escaped prisoner. The slave introduces himself as Walar, a Woodman. He tells his tale desperately, the words spilling out of him, as though trying to make up for months of isolation in a minute of companionship.

He recognised Magric the moment he saw him, for Magric betrayed him too – the trapper told Walar that he had found a cache of treasure in the marsh, and that he needed Walar's help to recover it. The pair went into the marshes, and Magric handed him over to the Orcs. For long months, now, he suffered as a slave of the Orcs on the Dwimmerhorn. The fortress is not far away.

Likely questions for Walar are listed below, together with his responses.

What were you doing there?

"They made us repair the walls of the fort, and to work in the smithy, making weapons for the Orcs. They whipped us without reason, tortured us... they made us suffer for sport!"

How many Orcs were there? What else lives there?

"I don't know how many Orcs there were. A great many. There were Men, too, not as many. And in the temple... there was something else, something horrible. It... was a watchful shadow. It hated us. It delighted in our torment."

Temple?

"On the north side of the rock, there is a stone building. They never let us see beyond its doors, but I heard whispers from within. The dead dwell there, I am sure of it! I do not know what evil they wreak there, but... please, no, don't make me remember!"

How did you escape?

"When I was repairing one of the side walls, I saw that there was a narrow goat path down the side of the rock, on the far side from the main road. I waited for weeks until I had my chance. Two of the Orcs began quarrelling over some petty matter, and while they brawled, I jumped over the wall and climbed down the cliff. I nearly fell, but luck was with me, and I reached the bottom alive. A sentry spotted me, and I fled, and they have been on my heels ever since."

Walar is too weak and exhausted to accompany the characters to the Dwimmerhorn. If they free him from his chains (using **Craft**), then he will wait for them in the marshes and return with them to Mountain Hall.

- Part Six -
By Secret Ways

Following Walar's directions, the company travel across the marshes until the black rock of the Dwimmerhorn looms out of the mist. The rock rises more than one hundred and fifty feet above the marshy plain. Tufts of green grass grow from small ledges and cracks in the black cliffside, but the rock is almost sheer in places. Climbing it will be exceedingly difficult. Atop the rock, the company can make out a low curtain wall encircling several buildings, a ghastly temple of black stone among them: a sickly greenish light flares from time to time from its narrow windows.

The Dwimmerhorn

More than two thousand years ago, Isildur was ambushed by Orcs and slain in the Gladden Fields. The One Ring – Isildur's Bane – slipped from his finger and was lost in the waters of the Great River. When the Enemy came to Dol Guldur, he sent out his slaves to search the marshes and the river for signs of the Ring. The Dwimmerhorn housed but one of their outposts and watchtowers.

When Gandalf entered Dol Guldur for the first time in the year 2063, the Enemy fled before him, and his servants dispersed. The Dwimmerhorn was abandoned and remained empty for many long years. It was repaired and reoccupied only centuries later, when the search for the One Ring resumed.

When the White Council attacked Dol Guldur and the Necromancer was again forced to retreat, a minion of the Enemy, the spirit known as the Gibbet King fled to the Dwimmerhorn and now dwells there.

The Gibbet King commands more than two hundred Orcs, and can demand service from the Orcs of the Misty Mountains when necessary. Evil men who lived in Dol Guldur and worship the darkness have followed the spirit into exile. Other horrors sleep beneath the Dwimmerhorn, awaiting their true master's call.

The Dwimmerhorn

1. The Road: The easiest approach to the fort atop the Dwimmerhorn is this narrow path that winds across the south face of the rock. In places, the path is so narrow that only a single traveller can pass, and it is impossible to climb it without being seen from the gatehouse above.

2. Gatehouse: This crumbling fortification controls the main approach to the fort. The road ends at an iron portcullis that is controlled from within the gatehouse. Arrow-slits and murder-holes allow those within to rain death down on attackers. There are a dozen Orcs in the gatehouse.

3. Curtain Walls: The low walls are no more than eight feet tall at their highest, but they run right up against the edge of the cliff, to dissuade those who might try to climb the rock.

4. Orc Barracks: This long building is a den for the Orc warriors who dwell here. The building stinks like a midden and is lit only by foul-smelling candles. At any time, there are more than a score of Orcs here or in the courtyard outside. Their taskmasters keep the Orcs hard at work, whipping the slaves or drilling for battle.

5. Storehouses: These contain supplies looted from the surrounding countryside. The storehouses are simple buildings of wood, not stone.

6. Smithy: This smithy is at work night and day, churning out weapons for the Orcs.

7. Warg Den: The blood-thirsty wolves are kept here, tended by slaves and fed with slaves.

The Dwimmerhorn

8. Keep: The keep is only partially intact, and the whole upper floor is crumbling and uninhabitable. The lower floor is used to house the human servants of the spirit, as well as the Orc-captain Ghor (see sidebar).

9. Temple: See *The Shadow in the Temple*, below.

10. Pits: Slaves are kept in this underground prison, dug into the upper surface of the rock. They have little shelter from the weather – instead of a ceiling, they have only an iron grating.

11. Catacomb Entrance: This foreboding crypt leads down into tunnels beneath the rock. What lurks there is a mystery.

12. Secret Path: This is the secret path discovered by Walar. Using the path allows members of the company to scale the rock and enter the fort by secret.

Ghor the Despoiler

> "...a huge Orc-chieftain, almost man-high, clad in black mail from head to foot, leaped into the chamber..."

Ghor was bred in the Mountains of Shadow, the western fence of Mordor in the distant south. He came north to serve the Necromancer in his woodland fastness. When Dol Guldur fell, he gathered a band of strong Orcs and went reaving through Mirkwood, hunting and killing until the Elves ambushed them, and only Ghor survived. Alone, he wandered aimlessly, hunting Woodmen for his meat. In the last year, he heard a call and found his way to the Dwimmerhorn. Here, he quickly rose to become captain of the fort (the previous captain he threw from the top of the wall).

He is a strong, proud Orc, at the height of his strength, with a fearful iron helm bearing the sign of the Red Eye. None shall rival him, and now that Bolg son of Azog is dead, it shall be Ghor son of Ghâsh who rules the North!

Ghor the Despoiler:

Attribute Level	
6	
Endurance	Hate
35	6
Parry	Armour
5	3d +4 (Helm)
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 2
Movement, 2	Custom, 2
Perception, 2	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Heavy Scimitar (2H)	3
Orc-axe	3
Special Abilities	
Commanding Voice	Hideous Toughness
Horrible Strength	Savage Assault

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Heavy Scimitar	7	10	14	Break shield
Orc-Axe	5		16	Break shield

Burglary

Not even one of the Elf-lords of old could storm the Dwimmerhorn single-handedly and live to tell the tale, and the companions are not yet legendary heroes. They need stealth and secrecy, not force. Radagast gave them the quest of finding out what evil lurked in the Gladden Fields, and the answer to that question is within the dark temple atop the rock.

Ideally, the company make it into the Temple and eavesdrop on the spirit. However, it is possible that the company's spying is spotted earlier. When the company is discovered, they must flee or perish – move onto *Fly, You Fools!*

Crossing the Marshes

The first step is to cross the marshland at the foot of the rock without being seen. This requires a **Stealth** test (or three **Stealth** tests with TN 10, if the company prefer to creep slowly instead of darting across); if the test is failed, then the companion is permitted an **Awareness** test to spot the danger and dive into cover in the nick of time.

Climbing the Cliffs

Climbing the cliffs requires **Athletics**. Most of the cliff face is a *daunting* climb (TN 20), but the secret path described by Walar is simply *hard* (TN 16). Companions who do not dare to climb quickly can approach the goat trail with caution, turning the attempt into a prolonged action requiring three **Athletics** rolls at TN 14.

Falling

Failing an **Athletics** roll while climbing means the companion slips and falls. If this happens, roll the Feat die and read the result below.

- **:** The companion falls from the cliff from its highest point and plummets to his death! Unless the adventurer was climbing alone, another companion may attempt to catch him with another **Athletics** test.
- **1-10:** The companion slips and slides and loses a number of Endurance points equal to double the die result.
- ᚠ: Fortune smiles on the adventurer, and he catches himself before he falls on a handy tree-root.

Sneaking Around the Fortress

Once the burglars reach the top of the cliff and clamber over the wall, they can explore the Dwimmerhorn. Moving from building to building requires a **Stealth** test, with the TN varying from 12 to 18 depending on distance and circumstances.

Lockmand

A trader and dealer in strange artefacts and curiosities, Lockmand hails originally from Esgaroth, where he was one of the previous Master's closest associates. When the old Master fled, Lockmand decided that his affairs in the south suddenly needed urgent attention, and he left Laketown in haste. He has not been seen in the north in several years.

He fancies himself to be witty, urbane and sophisticated, and in his fancy talk he has quite convinced himself that morality is a thing for simple men. He speaks of 'alliances of convenience', of 'contracts and treaties and understandings', and believes that by helping the Enemy he will bring a great new order to the North. Lockmand plays little part in this adventure, but the company will meet him again in *The Crossing of Celduin*. It is very important that the heroes get but a glimpse of his appearance, lest they recognise him when they meet the trader in Dale.

The Shadow in the Temple

The fortress of the Dwimmerhorn is crudely built, raised by Orcs and their slaves. It is functional, but the wind whistles through gaps in the stones, and the buildings lean and totter. The temple, though, was built by servants of the Enemy out of the East. They cut the black stone of the Dwimmerhorn with wicked cunning and raised up a grim basilica in the manner of their homelands.

The black walls are devoid of decorations or statues, but their surface is polished like a mirror, and reflects back twisted images. Many narrow windows open high along the walls, letting out a greenish luminescence.

Entering the Temple

The heavy doors of the temple are tall and forged of green bronze, but they open easily when pushed inward. As soon as they cross the threshold, the companions are nearly frozen on the spot in fear, and can enter only with great effort: if the company obtained any magical boons from Radagast at the beginning of the adventure

(see page 87), there is a chance that what is inside the temple takes notice of the power bestowed upon them and attempts to dispel it.

- One companion (the one with the highest Wisdom rating) must make a roll against a *hard* difficulty (TN 16) for every spell laid upon the company (the *Beast Protection*, the *Spell of Concealment*, the *Travel Blessing*, even the *Storm bag*, but not the *Mirkwood Cordial*). The roll is made using the Feat die and a number of Success dice equal to the current number of Fellowship points available to the company.

  For example, if the company was adventuring under a Spell of Concealment, the Travel Blessing and carrying the Mirkwood Cordial, then two rolls would be required.

- If a roll is successful, the spell resists and the power in it remains concealed.

- If the roll is failed, the spell is broken and the company feels the Wizard's benevolence leave them: all companions lose a Fellowship point, and the company's presence has been noticed.

- Finally, if the roll fails and the Feat die produced an eye result, not only the spell is broken and the company loses a Fellowship point, but all companions are daunted and are considered to be Weary for as long as they remain inside the temple.

The Sanctum

Inside the temple, many pillars of black stone support its tall roof. Upon entering, the companions see that the unseemly light originates from the far end, where a heavily sculpted casket with an open side lies against the wall of a small shrine. Coffin-sized and apparently made of gilded wood reinforced with iron bands, the casket displays an oversized length of chain, each black metal link the size of a human head. The luminescence seems to radiate from the Chain itself.

Bathed in the green glow stand two figures – one is a human (Lockmand), the other is the Orc-captain Ghor. They are deep in conversation, but even the hoarse voice of the Orc is kept at a whisper. Between them, lying on the floor, is an ancient withered corpse, with pale skin drawn tight over bones. It is dressed in a black robe, its unmoving head featureless but for a gleam in its eye-sockets. A harsh and chilling voice emerges from the corpse's lips as the spirit speaks through them.

- The companions are too far away to hear the conversation, so they must sneak closer if they are to listen. This requires a **Stealth** test. If successful, they catch a few words of conversation between the three.

The Conversation

The man, the Orc and the spirit are planning their future moves.

The Orc urges that they need to move sooner rather than later. *"The mountain-maggots want plunder and war. They say they didn't come south to sit and wait in their holes. They want to kill!"*

The human argues that they are not ready. *"We need more time. The Chain is useless to us, unless we master its secrets. We must bide our time, until we can strike with the greatest weapon in all of Middle-earth."*

The corpse stirs and whispers, every word a shiver along the companions' spines. *"Send word to the mountain tribes. They will wait, or they will die with the rest of the North. Double your patrols. If we are discovered, all may be lost."*

The Orc and the man kneel before the corpse, then depart. **Stealth** tests are again needed to avoid being spotted.

Exploring the Temple

Once Lockmand and the Orc have left, the companions may want to have a look around. The temple is empty, except for the gilded casket containing the Chain and the dried corpse sprawled in front of it.

Even from a distance, the companions notice that the gleam that previously animated the eye-sockets of the corpse seems to have been extinguished. No voice emerges from its lips, and now it appears as nothing more than the desiccated remains of a man.

If they feel confident, the companions can creep close to the casket using **Stealth** rolls, as above. Alternatively, a character can use **Search** to make out details in the darkness. Looking at the casket and its content from any distance is uncomfortable, and makes the observer feel a tightness in his chest, as if invisible bonds were closing around him.

- If anyone gets close enough to touch the Chain, they gain 1 Shadow point. The Chain is too big and heavy to be stolen.

Discovered!

If any of the companions fail a **Stealth** or **Search** roll whilst sneaking about the Dwimmerhorn, then the spirit senses the intruders and raises the alarm. The burglars are surprised when a shadowy figure slithers towards them. Any of the company who saw the spirit in *Those Who Tarry No Longer* recognises it as the same horror.

The spirit hisses a word in the Black Speech of Mordor, then vanishes. A moment later, the Orc-horns blow.

The Chain of Thangorodrim

The chain inside the temple is a relic of great power. It was forged in the Elder Days by the dark powers of the world, and was used to enslave proud, rebellious Dragons. When placed around a creature, the Chain robs the creature of all free will and forces them to serve the master of the Chain. It was carried out of the far north by evil men in the Second Age, and rested in the tunnels under Mount Gram for many centuries. When the Necromancer claimed Dol Guldur as his new sanctum, the Chain was brought there and given into the keeping of the Gibbet King, although the Necromancer retained mastery of the artefact. Particularly troublesome slaves were subjected to the iron mercy of the Chain.

When Dol Guldur was assaulted by the White Council, the Gibbet King had the Chain moved to the Dwimmerhorn, so that he might study it and master it fully.

– Part Seven –
Fly, You Fools!

Once the company is discovered, they must escape. The flight from the Dwimmerhorn itself is perilous – the company must climb down the rockface again, or else fight their way across the courtyard and out past the gatehouse. If the company stop or try to hold their ground, they will be overcome. Their only hope lies in stealth and swiftness.

Climbing down the Rock

It is easier to climb down than to climb up. The companions only need to pass one **Athletics** test at TN 14. The Orcs fire arrows at the escaping intruders, so the longer the company cling to the wall, the more attacks they are subjected to (they are subject to one arrow shot each if they do not tarry unnecessarily).

As the company escape the shadow of Dwimmerhorn, they hear Orcs shouting commands from above. *"Find them! Kill them! No escape!"* The portcullis grinds open, and brigades of Orcs march forth. The company are the quarry in a bloody hunt.

The Journey

The company is ninety miles away from Mountain Hall, across the marshes and bogs of the Gladden Fields and the foothills of the Misty Mountains.

- Based on the usual journey rules, the trip back to Mountain Hall requires eight days of march and two Fatigue tests.

As first presented in the adventure *Kinstrife & Dark Tidings* the companions can also press themselves with a *Forced march.*

- If they undertake a forced march, the return trip will take four days, but it requires two **Athletics** tests in addition to the two Fatigue tests.

On a success, the hero's Fatigue rating goes up 1 point, 2 points on a failure, and remains unchanged on a great or extraordinary success.

- As far as the pursuit is concerned, attempting a Forced march raises the company's Lead by 2 points.

Other Routes?

While Mountain Hall is the closest haven to the Gladden Fields, the company may decide to head to Rhosgobel or some other destination, or try to lead the Orcs away from Mountain Hall. If the players choose this, then adapt the journey to the company's new destination.

Hunted!

The company is pursued by Orcs out of Dwimmerhorn. To handle the hunt, the Loremaster must keep track of the company's Lead, which measures how close the Orcs are on their trail. At the start of the hunt, the Lead begins at a value equal to the Company's highest **Travel** skill.

- This rating diminishes whenever the companions fail at a roll made to resolve the journey: either a **Travel** roll, an **Athletics** test to do a forced march, or another roll as required by a Hazard episode, for example.

If the Lead rating is reduced to zero, then the company has been overtaken by its pursuers (see *Overtaken!* below). If the company reach their destination before this happens, then they are safe from the Orcs.

Distance the Pursuers

At the beginning of the pursuit, the distance between the company and its pursuers is rather small. The company can increase their Lead by attempting the following:

- **Hiding their tracks (Hunters):** This requires a **Hunting** test against TN 16. Each Huntsman in the company may make a roll once for the entire journey. The company gains +1 Lead on a success, +2 on a great success, and +3 on an extraordinary success.

- **Taking unexpected paths (Scouts):** This requires an **Explore** test against TN 16. Each Scout in the company may make a roll once for the entire journey. The company gain +1 Lead on a success, +2 on a great success, and +3 on an extraordinary success.

If any of the rolls described above fails, the Loremaster reduces the Lead of the company by one for each failed roll. If any one of the tests fails producing an 👁 result, the company has left a trail or lost ground: roll a Success dice and deduct that much Lead.

Overtaken!

If the Lead is ever reduced to 0 (or less), then the company has been overtaken by outriders and scouts. They have a last chance to either hide from these pursuers, or ambush them.

- If they succeed, their Lead rating is restored to a value of one. If they fail, an enemy scout spots the company and reports back to the main body of the pursuers (see *Caught in the Open*, below).

Caught in the Open

If the company are overtaken by Ghor's hunters, they have several options, most of them unappealing.

Stand and Fight

The company are massively outnumbered, but they could try fighting. They face some 50 Orcs, mostly Orc Soldiers and Snaga Trackers, led by Ghor himself. The company must find a place like a narrow gorge or rocky outcrop that they can defend without taking on all the Orcs at once.

I'll Hold Them Off

One or two members of the company could make a heroic last stand, sacrificing their own lives by fighting the entire Orc-host while the rest flee. The survivor's Lead is increased to 3, plus one per Orc slain by the defenders.

Unlikely Aid
The companions may be able to call upon unlikely allies to help them escape, such as the King of the Eagles, if they won his favour in *Those Who Tarry No Longer*. Allies may either increase the company's Lead, or end the chase prematurely.

Arrival at the Hall

When the company return to Mountain Hall, they find a dozen archers levelling bows at them across the narrow bridge. They are under the command of Beranald, the doorkeeper. A moment later, Hartfast arrives to speak to the company. The traitorous guide Magric is at Hartfast's side.

The chieftain challenges the company: *"You are not welcome here. Magric has told us about how you tried to murder him in the marshes. You are outlaws and Orc-friends! If I see you again, I shall have you put to death. Leave now and never return!"*

The company must plead their case. This requires a test of **Awe** or **Persuade**, although **Inspire** can also work. The TN for this test starts at TN 16, modified as follows:

- -2 if Walar is with the company;
- -2 if the company left on good terms with Hartfast, or -4 if they left as friends of Mountain Hall (they have been shown the Horn of Warning);
- -2 if the company are clearly injured after battles with Orcs;
- - the Standing of any Woodmen in the company;
- +2 if there are no Woodmen or Beornings in the company;

Treachery!

If the company succeeds in the test and instills some doubts in the mind of Hartfast, then a blade flashes in Magric's hand and he attempts to stab the chieftain: if the companions didn't expect anything like that, then Magric is able to wound Hartfast grievously, before he bolts to dive into the river. If no companion gets him with a spear or bow, he rapidly disappears as the bows of the Woodmen send arrows into the raging waters.

If Magric's attempt to assassinate Hartfast is foiled and the turncoat is still alive, the chieftain of Mountain Hall turns on him with cold fury.

> *"How many of my people have you led to slavery? How long have you plotted with my enemies? Damn you! If it is gold that you want, then gold you shall have! Take him to the deepest part of the gold mine and wall him up in a side tunnel. Let the traitor live in the same darkness as his Orc-friends!"*

If the company fails in winning back Hartfast's trust, the companions are refused entry into Mountain Hall, and must face the Orcs alone – see *Caught in the Open* at page 105 for guidelines on how to deal with the unfortunate result.

Assassins in the Hall

The company finds safety in Mountain Hall. The settlement is well fortified, and Ghor's force lacks the strength to besiege it. Woodmen look-outs spot Ghor's host approach the hall, and the Orcs even send some scouts up the valley, but the Orcs turn back and seem to retreat south towards the Marshes rather than risk an attack on the hall. Hartfast is pleased by this, and invites the company to stay for some days so they can rest and recover from the long chase. He assigns them places to sleep in a house near the trading post, and allows them to keep their weapons instead of leaving them at the doorkeeper's house.

Unbeknownst to the company, Ghor travels only a few miles south before turning west. He meets with Goblins of the Misty Mountains, who show him secret underground passages that connect with the mines of Mountain Hall. These passages are too narrow for Ghor's entire host, but are perfectly suited to sneaking a small number of assassins into Mountain Hall. Ghor himself leads this secret attack. His intent is to sneak into the Hall, find the company, and kill them before they can tell what they have discovered.

Waking in the Night

One night, call for **Awareness** tests; the TN for this test is 16, unless the company keep a look-out even when sleeping in the hall. If any roll succeeds, then they are woken by the sound of guttural voices outside their house, and have time to grab weapons and don armour. If they fail, then the first warning they get is when the Orcs smash down their door, and the company begins the fight without armour.

The Assassins

The assassins are led by Ghor himself; he is accompanied by two Orc Soldiers and two Snaga Trackers (whose snuffling nostrils have located the abode of the companions). All are armed with poisoned blades.

- The company must survive for six Combat Rounds before help arrives. After six rounds, the Woodmen come with Hartfast in the lead, and the Orcs are surrounded and slaughtered.

- Epilogue - The Shadow of the Future

Surviving Ghor's assault brings this adventure to an end. After resting at Mountain Hall, the company can bring word to Radagast at Rhosgobel of what they saw in the marshes. The Wizard is deeply troubled by the company's description of the spirit and the Chain.

Strangely, when more scouts are sent to keep watch on the Dwimmerhorn, they find the hilltop fort to be completely deserted. The Gibbet King and his servants have vanished into the marsh as though they never existed. Radagast speculates that the enemy did not expect to be discovered so soon, and has retreated to some other place of safety. He fears that the enemy is still plotting against the Free Peoples, and that the stroke will fall where they least expect it...

Fellowship Phase

Either Rhosgobel or Mountain Hall may be made into a sanctuary through the Open New Sanctuary undertaking. There is also a special undertaking that might be pursued after this adventure:

Search for Answers

The character delves into books of lore, and spends long hours in conversation with the wise and the learned. Over the course of many weeks' research, the character discovers secrets of lore related to an obscure topic. The character must have at least a rating of 1 in the **Lore** skill to complete this undertaking. The Loremaster may require the character to make tests of various skills (most likely **Lore**, **Courtesy** and **Travel**) to gain access to ancient secrets.

In this particular case, the character learns the history and nature of the Chain of Thangorodrim, and how it is said to be able to enslave the wills of others.

- the crossings - of celduin

- **When:** The company may undertake this quest in any year from 2946 onwards. The adventure *A Darkness in the Marshes* should be played first. The adventure starts in the last days of November, when the city of Dale is preparing for the Gathering of Five Armies. If the adventure is set in 2946, then this is the first Gathering, held five years after the battle that gives the celebration its name.

- **Where:** The adventure takes place east of Mirkwood, in Dale and the regions south of Lake-town.

- **What:** A raven brings word of an army approaching the Crossings of the River Running (the Celduin in Elvish), and the company are sent south to hold off the attackers until King Bard can rally an army.

- **Why:** Treachery has struck in the heart of Dale, and a villain has poisoned many of King Bard's best warriors during the festivities for the Gathering of the Five Armies.

- **Who:** The company meets and interacts with King Bard the Dragonslayer, and face in battle the spirit whose machinations have recently plagued Wilderland.

Adventuring Phase

This adventure is divided into eight parts, taking the company from merriment in Dale to a desperate battle at the crossings.

Part One - The Gathering of Five Armies

Adventurers, warriors, travellers and heroes from across the North gather for the great feast celebrating the victory at the Battle of Five Armies. The companions arrive in Dale for the festivities, as does a certain Grey Pilgrim...

Part Two - A Golden Prize

A merchant from Esgaroth offers a prize for the best warrior and best archer in Dale, and almost every fighting man in the town enters the contest. The merchant also promises that every entrant, regardless of how well they perform, will be part of a great feast. The companions may or may not choose to enter the contest.

Part Three - An Ill-Made Party

The feast is poisoned, and most of Dale's soldiers are stricken with illness! The merchant attempts to flee – the company may be able to capture him before he escapes in a boat.

Part Four - Raven's Tidings

A raven of the Mountain arrives, bringing word of an army that marches against the North. Soon it will cross the River Running. To buy time for the Kingdom and Lake-town to mount a defence, King Bard calls all those who can still travel and fight to serve in this hour of need.

Part Five - South to the Crossings

The company travel south to the Crossings of Celduin, rallying the countryside as they go.

Part Six - The Calm Before The Storm

The company arrive at a small village, and prepare for the battle to come.

Part Seven - The Battle Begins

The enemy attack the village, trying to force their way across the river. Battle is joined!

Part Eight - The Last Day

Having repulsed the first attackers, the company have only a few more hours to hold out – but are they clinging to a fool's hope?

- Part One -
The Gathering of Five Armies

Word has spread throughout the North about the magnificence of the festivities held in Dale at the end of the month of November. For weeks now, travellers and traders have made their way to the town. The roads are crowded with all manner of folk, both locals and strange foreigners. Farmers who never travelled farther than Esgaroth rub shoulders with Elves of Mirkwood and Dwarves who came all the way from the Iron Hills or even from the distant Blue Mountains; some visitors have come north from as far away as Dorwinion.

- If the company were separated during the most recent Fellowship phase, they may have agreed to meet at Dale. Half the Free Folk in Wilderland will be here. Characters whose patron is not attending, or who are of exceptionally high Standing, may be sent as official emissaries to represent their folk.

Arrival in Dale

The town is filled to overflowing when the company arrives. A sea of pitched tents has sprung up around the Traders Gate, and the Merchant Way (the road leading to Esgaroth) is positively crowded. There is a carnival atmosphere in the town, an abundant joy that mixes the excitement of the feast with the glorious end of the harvest season. Pedlars offer the company trinkets and sweets as they push through the crowded streets. Jugglers, fire-eaters and other entertainers caper and dance. Every inn is full, and every voice is lifted in song.

- If any of the companions are from Dale, then they can stay with their kin or in their own homes. Visitors have trouble finding a room; a Rich companion can afford a room in an inn like the *Drunkenstone*, but everyone else must camp outside the town. Dale-folk with a Standing of 3 or more may be offered a bed at the Royal Palace.

The Drunkenstone

This was one of the first inns built in Dale, and was originally called the New Inn. A man named Skelid recently purchased it and changed the name. The sign hanging outside depicts the fabled Arkenstone above a mug of beer. Many of the older Dwarves of the Mountain consider this to be disrespectful to the gemstone, but that has not stopped younger, wilder Dwarves from wetting their beards with the inn's ale. Skelid is young and ambitious, with his fingers in many pies in Dale, and he sometimes has need of discreet adventurers who are not afraid of a little underhanded work or burglary.

The Market

Traders have come from far and wide to the great market, the biggest in the North in many years. Dale is a young kingdom, and one with coin to spend. The former Desolation of Smaug has bloomed and brought forth rich harvest after rich harvest. The Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain get most of the benefit of this new wealth, as the Bardings hire stonecutters and builders and artisans. The market brings many other treasures and wonders to Dale – clothing and jewellery from Lake-town, leather and woodcraft from as far as Mirkwood, wine from Dorwinion, smithcraft from the Iron Hills.

Many of the stalls offer toys, games or curiosities. Candied apples and figs, meat on sticks, ale, wine, dwarf-spirits, mead from the Elvenking's halls and all manner of delights are to be had. There are carvings and banners celebrating the victory at the Battle of Five Armies. Some stalls offer stranger things – books of lore, ancient scrolls, magical talismans, charms, love potions and enchanted philtres, rings that ward off evil, scales and claws from Smaug (they may look like bear claws or lizard scales, but the merchant insists they were plucked from the Dragon's corpse).

The company pass two traders brawling, both accusing the other of selling a fake Black Arrow when they swear they have the original.

Masks

Several stalls are selling painted wooden or leather masks, and they are doing a lot of business. If the companions ask, they learn that it is a fashion imported from Dorwinion, and that almost everyone will wear one tonight, after the ceremonial opening of the festivities.

Amusements & Contests

In the streets around the market, there are games and diversions where a lucky companion could win a few coins.

Riddle-games

One of the most popular contests among the folk of Dale, the Riddle-game is held on a stage. Wit and charm are just as important as cunning here – if you can't make the crowd laugh with your riddles, they are likely to boo you off the stage in the early round of the contest. By the end of the contest, though, the few surviving contestants are those whose minds are a storehouse of riddles and puzzles.

- If a companion participates in the Riddle-game, he must make a series of three **Riddle** tests. The first is at TN 10, the second at TN 14, and the third at TN 18. If he succeeds at all three, he wins the Riddle-game and may change one of his Distinctive features to *Crafty*. Every character who participates in the contest also gains an Advancement point.

Sample Riddles

Though I run all day, I never tire
For my bed is hard and cold
And though you'll meet me on the plain
For my head is in the mountain
And if I breathe on you
You'll think I am a fountain
Who am I?
The River Running, which rises at the Lonely Mountain

The more of them you take, the more you leave behind. What are they?
Footprints

Song-contests

To enter the singing contest, a character must have **Song** ♦♦♦ or more. The TN to beat is 16. A companion who succeeds acquits himself well; a companion who scores a great success is invited to sing at the Royal Palace on some future day, and a companion who gets an extraordinary success is given a purse of gold (1 Treasure) and asked to sing at the masked ball this evening.

Games of Chance

The most popular forms of gambling in Dale revolve around dice and a popular Dwarf game that is basically dominoes played with runes. There are stranger games however, like betting on which rat will make it out of the maze first or wagering sums of money on the colour of the hood of the next stranger to come around the corner. If a character plays one of these games, roll the Feat die.

- On a 1-7, the character loses a small amount of money. On an 8-10, he wins a small amount. On a ᚠ, he wins a point of Treasure. On 👁, he loses a point of Treasure (or owes a point of Treasure if he has none to spare!).

The Opening Ceremony

At twilight, a crowd gathers around the fountain commemorating the Fall of Smaug, in front of the Royal Palace. A procession of nobles and courtiers emerges from its great front gate, and is welcomed by cheers and shouts from all bystanders. The group is led by Dáin, King under the Mountain, and a trio of elven emissaries clad in green and gold; they are followed by the Master of Lake-town. Last, King Bard makes his appearance, followed by his most trusted counsellors, all archers who formerly served in his company when he was but a Captain in Esgaroth.

King Bard steps forward to address the crowd. His dwarf-wrought crown glitters in the light of many lanterns. His frame is as lean and hard as it was when he brought down the Dragon, but this night his grey eyes are alight with joy.

"People of Wilderland!' he shouts. "Years ago we were strangers to each other, as we hid in shadows. We were afraid of a world where Dragons ruled and Orcs were free to plunder. Then, one day our worst fears came upon us, and threatened to bury us forever, together with our weaknesses and worries."

The crowd grows silent, as an old man wrapped in cloak and hood emerges from among the king's counsellors and takes place by Bard's side. Bard continues his speech:

"But then the clouds that darkened our days were torn by the wind, and a red sunset slashed the West. We fought together at the Battle of Five Armies, and we prevailed together. And today we are here to testify that since that day we stand united!"

As the crowd erupts, the old man casts aside his hood and cloak, raising a tall staff: Gandalf the Grey has come to Dale! Sudddenly, the staff of the Wizard blazes forth with a flash, and behind the Royal Palace, the sky over Dale erupts with the most magical fireworks, bright enough to illuminate the flanks of the Mountain. Flowers and trees and candelabras and shooting stars, and then a flock of great golden eagles that burst like the dawn.

The Grey Pilgrim

The Gathering of Five Armies might be the first occasion for the company to encounter the wandering Wizard. If this is not the first Gathering, then perhaps Gandalf is visiting Dale to evaluate the current political climate surrounding the courts of Men, Elves and Dwarves. Regardless of the precise cause for his presence, Gandalf is busy making private meetings with the various rulers of the area (especially if the year is 2948 or later) and won't take part in the celebrations (he will leave before the masked ball begins). As a consequence, only companions with access to the court of King Bard can hope to get to talk to him: it requires a Barding character with a Standing score of at least 4 to be invited to the Council, or a Wisdom rating of 3 or more for a private meeting if King Bard is a patron of the company.

If the companions have played through the *A Darkness in the Marshes* adventure, then it is Gandalf who seeks them out. The Grey Wizard conferred with Radagast, and is now worried about the true nature of the spirit that the company last saw on the Dwimmerhorn. Regardless of the nature of the encounter, the meeting is brief - Gandalf is busy with many concerns - and starts with the Wizard questioning the companions about what they know about the spirit. Then, it is his time to talk, and his is an interesting tale...

The Dungeons of Dol Guldur

"Many years ago I myself dared to pass the doors of the Necromancer in Dol Guldur for the second time, to secretly explore his ways. What I discovered in that occasion is not a matter that I will discuss here, but suffice it to say that I found the place to be even darker and oppressive than before. It seemed to me that a new power had allied itself with the Necromancer, and ruled the deeper pits of Dol Guldur."

"It was there that I found Thráin, the father of Thorin Oakenshield, wandering witless and near death in the blackest dungeons. I came too late, and he died before I could help him, but with his last words he uttered the name of his gaoler and tormentor: the Gibbet King."

"I fled that accursed place before the Necromancer could spy my presence, but I knew that my visit didn't go unnoticed. I felt the eyes of that dreadful lord of prisons upon me. The Gibbet King saw me, but seemed content to let me go."

The Masked Ball

As the fireworks die down, everyone in the crowd puts on a mask and starts to mingle. Musicians put hand to harp and mouth to flute, and the warm night is filled with song and dancing. There are several sets of musicians, notably a band of thirteen Dwarves (including Bombur himself) who get into a sort of musical battle with a group of Elves. While the two sides have very different styles (dwarven bombast contrasted with elvish harmonies), they are equally enthusiastic, and end up joining together to produce the strangest music ever heard in the North – but at least you can dance to it!

- If a companion won the singing contest, he is invited to sing. A good **Song** here wins the hero even greater renown and an invitation to play at the courts of the Elvenking and the King under the Mountain.

Folk at the Gathering

There are several characters that might be met at the ball:

Bombur the Fat: As one of the thirteen dwarven companions of Thorin Oakshield on the Quest of Erebor, Bombur certainly qualifies as 'great'. Since his adventure he has adjusted to his new uneventful life, and he is rapidly becoming the fattest Dwarf under the Mountain. He is here as part of King Dáin's court, and to sample the Barding's food. Dwelling mostly in dining halls and kitchens, Bombur knows all the gossip and secrets in Dale and the Lonely Mountain, and can be a useful source of information for the company if they befriend him. At the masked ball, he wears a Dragon mask – although no mask could hide his weight.

Elstan: When Bard became king of Dale, Elstan was among the first to swear loyalty to him. The tall grey-eyed, gaunt northerner is called the First Captain of Dale, and commands the Royal Barracks. He is famed for his skill with the sword, and his gleaming suit of dwarf-forged armour. Whenever the kingdom is threatened, he is there to defend it. The people love him, and he is the favourite in the melee to be held tomorrow. If any of the company is a Barding with a Standing of 2 or more, or are known for their service to Dale, then Elstan greets them. Others can try to fight their way through his crowd of admirers with **Awe**. Elstan wears his visored steel helm in lieu of a mask.

Gerold: Said by some to be kin to Beorn, Gerold is a fierce mercenary. A veritable giant of a man, his size belies his speed and reflexes. He can bury his axe in an Orc's head with a serpent-quick flick of the wrist. If he calls any place other than the battlefield home, it is nearby Esgaroth. He is here for whatever prize can be found in fighting contests held during the gathering. Gerold wears no mask – he's here for the free drink.

Galia: This young Elf-maid carries a bow that seems much too large for her slender frame, but her skill at archery is legendary even among her woodland kin. Of late, she has succumbed to wanderlust, and this visit to Dale is the start of her wanderings in the north. She wears a delicate wooden mask that resembles the moon. She can be befriended with tales of **Travel** or **Lore**.

Lockmand: The merchant Lockmand is everywhere tonight. He is a merchant from Esgaroth who left after the previous Master fled the town. He has recently returned to

the north, having made his fortune trading in 'antiquities and curios', and is eager to share his wealth. Secretly, Lockmand is in league with the spirit. He wears a great golden mask that looks like a beaming sun.

- Asking for rumours about Lockmand with **Riddle** (TN 14) reveals that he has a questionable past. He was closely associated with the old Master of Lake-town, and is now trying to curry favour with King Bard.

Observant characters may spot Lockmand speaking to Harrod the Fool in a corner about half-way through the evening.

Harrod the Fool: A jester in green-and-red motley, Harrod prances through the crowd, making fun of everyone of note. He fixates on the proudest members of the company and mocks and mimicks them mercilessly. Harrod is not as young as he once was, and he hopes to win a place in King Bard's court to provide for him in his old age, so he no longer has to wander from village to village, making peasants laugh for a warm meal and a place to sleep beside the fire.

- Towards the end of the evening, Harrod's spirits suddenly improve, and he capers with renewed vigour. Secretly, he was just hired by Lockmand to play a prank at the feast tomorrow night...

The Challenge

Towards the end of the evening, Lockmand the merchant clambers onto the stage to address the crowd.

> *"People of Dale! Tomorrow, there will be a great contest of arms! Swords! Spears! Archery! Let us gather all the defenders of the North, and see which of them is the greatest! In honour of this fine Gathering of Five Armies I shall give a prize to the victor! Behold!"*

He gestures to two of his servants, who drag a huge iron-bound chest onto the stage. Lockmand throws the lid back. Gold and gems spill from the chest, which is crammed with treasure. *"For Wilderland!"* shouts Lockmand. *"For the Free Folk of the North!"*

- Part Two -
A Golden Prize

Lockmand's servants must have worked all night long, for Dale awakens to find that a field has been cleared outside the town, between Ravensgate and the river. The company spot posters nailed to walls, calling for warriors to sign up for the tournament, which begins at noon.

Entering the Contest

If the company choose to enter the contest, they can do so, and they are not alone – it seems that every warrior of note in Dale, as well as half the fighting Dwarves of the Mountain and most of the wandering heroes and adventurers in the North, has signed up. A small army of clerks handles the entries. The characters are asked where they hail from, which events they wish to enter, and are reminded that all entrants, regardless of how well they do, are invited to a feast at Lockmand's expense.

The Contests

Each of the three lesser contests – *Archery*, *Strength*, and *Horse riding* – works in the same way. There are three rounds: two qualification rounds, and a final round against a named opponent.

Qualification Rounds

Each companion makes two skill tests for every qualification round. The first test is to gauge the situation and prepare (evaluation test) and the second to resolve the contest itself. The TN used is the same for both rolls in a round and is indicated in the Contests table below.

- Succeeding in the evaluation test gains a companion one Success dice to use in the second test, a great success gives two dice, and an extraordinary success gets three dice.

For example, in his first qualification round of an Archery contest a companion would first roll Awareness to aim and compensate for wind and distance (thus gaining bonus dice) and then Bow to hit the target (both rolls TN 14); then, in the second qualification round he would roll the same skills to the same effect but against TN 18.

If a companion succeeds in both rounds of qualification, he proceeds to the final round. If multiple companions participate in the same contest, then any number of them can pass through the qualification rounds, but only the character who gets the highest result during the second round of qualification moves through to the final round.

For example, Caranthir, Beli and Beran of the Mountains all enter the Strength contest. Caranthir fails in round one and is out, while Beli and Beran succeed and both proceed to the second round of qualification. This time, they both pass their ***Athletics*** *rolls, but Beli only scrapes past with an 18, whereas Beran gets a 21. As they are competing in the same contest, Beran is the one who goes through to the last round, where he will wrestle Gerold.*

Final Round

The final round is resolved with two tests, as in the previous rounds. The TN for the first test (*evaluation*) is TN 20 for all contests, and success gains bonus dice as before. The second roll is resolved as an opposed action (see page 148 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game* for details) against the Loremaster character indicated in the *Contests* table.

- In the *Archery* and *Horse riding* contests, the two finalists both test their skills against TN 20 and then compare their result; in the Strength contest the two rolls are compared directly instead.

For example, when Beran goes to the final round, he will have to first roll Awe against TN 20 to intimidate Gerold and build his confidence up (gaining bonus dice) and then will have to make an opposed roll putting his Athletics skill directly against that of Gerold; this means that Beran's player and the Loremaster will both roll the dice and directly compare their results.

Contests:

Contest	Skills Used	First Qualification Round TN	Second Qualification Round TN	Final Round TN	Final Opponent
Archery	**Awareness**, any **Bow** skill	14	18	20	Galia (Bow 5, Attribute Level 5)
Strength	**Awe**, **Athletics**	14	18	20	Gerold (Athletics 4, Attribute Level 7)
Horse riding	**Athletics**, **Spear**	14	18	20	Elstan (Spear 4, Attribute Level 6)

Gerold, Galia and Elstan all add their Attribute level to their roll results, as their main skills are all favoured.

Archery

Each round involves firing at a wreath nailed to a wide wooden board. Contestants must put their arrows inside the circle inscribed within the wreath, or at least hit the wreath itself. In each round, the targets are moved further away (the TN increases as shown on the *Contests* table). The **Awareness** test at the start of each round is to judge the wind whipping off the Lonely Mountain and to estimate the distance.

- If a companion does not win then it is Galia the Elf who cooly puts three arrows through the bulls-eye and takes the prize out from under the noses of the Royal Archers of Dale and the archers from the Bowmen's Guild of Esgaroth.

Horse riding

The contestants must ride by a set of straw targets at high speed, and thrust or hurl a spear into the targets as they pass. The **Athletics** test is to control the horse, while the **Spear** test is to drive the weapon home.

- If a companion does not take the prize then it is Elstan, the First Captain of Dale, who is declared the winner.

Strength

These are wrestling contests, held in a fighting ring of sand by the riverbank. The **Awe** test is to demoralise the opposition and get the support of the crowd, while the **Athletics** test is the grappling contest itself (this is a contest of vigour, not a brawl – that would use the **Dagger** skill instead, even when unarmed).

- If a companion does not win, then the brutal Gerold is victorious. His final opponent is a strapping young Dwarf from the Mountain. Gerold uses his greater reach to outmanoeuvre the Dwarf, then lifts his foe by the beard and tosses him out of the ring and into the river.

Prizes

Lockmand promises that each winner will be presented with a purse of gold worth 5 Treasure at the feast tonight.

- Each companion who is declared the winner in one of the challenges is considered to enjoy a Tolerance modifier of +1 for each contest won, applied to any encounter in Dale and Lake-town for the next year.

The Melee

The final event – and the one that draws the most attention – is the grand melee. This is a big mock battle. Theoretically, it is every man for himself, but in practise different factions stick together. So, the largest force on the field are the warriors of Dale under their captain, Elstan, closely followed by the Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain and the warriors of Lake-town. The Elves do not enter the melee.

Early Rounds

The early rounds of the melee see the participating companions fight against a host of lesser foes. To determine how the adventurers fare in the chaotic mess have each companion in the melee make two rolls.

- First, a **Battle** test is required, and then a roll of their preferred Weapon skill (both at the default difficulty of TN 14). Ranged weapons may not be used in the melee.

Early Rounds:

Weapon skill result	Conduct
Failed with an :	*The companion is eliminated, losing half his Endurance, and must make a Protection roll against TN 16 to avoid becoming Wounded.*
Failed	*The companion is eliminated, losing half his Endurance.*
Normal success	*The companion survives, but loses half of his remaining Endurance.*
Great success	*The companion survives, but loses one quarter of his remaining Endurance.*
Extraordinary success	*The companion is uninjured in the melee!*

If the **Battle** test is successful, the companion gains one Success dice for the Weapon test. If he gets a great success in the **Battle** test, it is worth two Success dice, and an extraordinary success is worth three dice.

The Weapons test determines how well the companion survives the first part of the melee. Check the result obtained on the Early Rounds table.

Following Rounds

Companions who survive the early rounds of the melee must make the same two rolls (**Battle** and then Weapon skill) once again, only this time against a difficulty of TN 16.

- If any survive this second part of the tourney, then they are among the last few warriors to survive and move onto the final round.

The Last Few Heroes

After an hour of heavy fighting, only a few warriors remain standing on the muddy field by the river. There is Gerold, the wild mercenary. Despite using blunt axes, he has maimed one foe and smashed the dwarf-forged shield of another. In the middle of the field, atop a little hillock, are a company of Dwarves from the Lonely Mountain, who fight with the tenacity of Durin's folk but are clearly exhausted. Finally, Elstan and a troupe of his best warriors command the ground near the river, and have won the love of the crowd with their heroics.

- If the companions still stand, then they must choose whether to fight against Gerold or Elstan and his followers (the Dwarves are too distant). Whichever group they do not fight battles the Dwarves. If they win this fight, then they must finally defeat whichever foe is left (among Elstan or Gerold).

Blunted Weapons

In the melee, all combatants use blunted weapons. These weapons have an Injury score that is six less than normal. Most combatants surrender if they are reduced to ¼ of their starting Endurance. Note that the other combatants have already suffered damage in the fight and so start at a reduced Endurance.

- Traditionally, only one warrior may claim the prize. However, if the company are the only combatants left on the field, they may either fight amongst themselves or else come to some agreement about who is considered the champion.

Gerold the Beorning:

Attribute Level	
7	
Endurance	Hope
20	4
Parry	Armour
4	2d
Skills	
Personality, 2	Survival, 2
Movement, 4	Custom, 2
Perception, 3	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Axe	4
Special Abilities	
Terrible Strength	*Following a successful attack, reduce Gerold's Hope point score by one to increase the target's Endurance loss by 7 points.*

Elstan, First Captain of Dale:

Attribute Level	
6	
Endurance	Hope
18	3
Parry	Armour
3 + 3 (Great Shield)	3d +4
Skills	
Personality, 4	Survival, 2
Movement, 3	Custom, 3
Perception, 2	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Spear	4
Special Abilities	
Commanding Voice	

Elstan Followers:

Attribute Level	
3	
Endurance	Hope
12	2
Parry	Armour
3 + 3 (Great Shield)	3d +1
Skills	
Personality, 2	Survival, 1
Movement, 2	Custom, 3
Perception, 2	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Sword	2

The End of the Contest

The victor of the contest is lifted from the battlefield by a crowd of cheering spectators and carried shoulder-high through the streets of Dale to the feast-hall prepared by Lockmand. Other warriors pick themselves out of the mud and stagger after the crowd, eager to get to the feast and drown their sorrows.

- If the winner was a companion, he receives an additional Experience point for this outstanding deed, and is considered to enjoy a modifier of +2 to the Tolerance of any encounter in Dale and Lake-town for the next year (bonuses due to the other contests are cumulative with this one).

If the companions were all defeated, then a battered and bruised Elstan stands victorious over Gerold.

- Part Three - An Ill-Made Party

The company – along with virtually every warrior in Dale – is welcome at Lockmand's feast. The merchant has raised a party tent in the market square. This is a feast by Hobbit-standards, where it snows food and rains drink, especially the latter. By the time the companions arrive, the sun has disappeared behind the stony arms of the Mountain and the barrels of wine and casks of ale have already been opened. After all, tourney fighting is thirsty work! King Bard is not present, nor is Dáin Ironfoot; Gandalf the Grey has already left the city. Bombur, of course, would never miss free food, so he is in a place of honour at the high table, next to the winners of the various contests.

In front of the high table is a plinth that bears the chest of gold promised to the winner of the melee and the three small bags of treasure for the best archer, wrestler and rider in Dale. Oddly, there is no sign of Lockmand, the merchant who organised the whole dinner. If the companions ask, then the servants assume that their employer is busy dealing with the cooks. The truth is much more sinister, although the company are unlikely to discover this immediately.

Treachery in the Dark

Last night, the merchant hired the jester Harrod to play a 'joke' on the winners. Harrod is to disguise himself as Lockmand; he will wear Lockmand's robes and mask from the ball the previous night, and pretend to have lost his voice cheering at the tournament. He will present what he believes to be an empty chest to the winner, open it theatrically, and then pull off his mask and reveal that he is in fact a jester. Lockmand will then enter with the real chest, or so he told Harrod.

- In fact, the 'fake' chest contains a nest of poisonous serpents and, by the time it is opened, Lockmand intends to be half a league down the River Running in a fast boat. The wine at the feast is poisoned, too. The poison is very diluted, to disguise its taste, but any warrior who drinks enough of it will be incapacitated for several days.

Intrigue at the Feast

Suspicious companions may wish to pause their carousing to find Lockmand.

- If they do so, call for **Search** tests at TN 18. A success means the character finds 'Lockmand' – the disguised Harrod – arriving at the back of the tent; a great success means the character surprises 'Lockmand' getting changed, and spots that it is the jester Harrod wearing the merchant's clothes and mask; an extraordinary success means the character sees Lockmand and several of his surly guards loading a large heavy chest onto a boat and fleeing Dale under cover of darkness – see *Tracking Down Lockmand*, below.

Other companions may prefer to just enjoy the feast, trading tales of heroism on the battlefield and enjoying themselves. The food is excellent, and while there is a slightly bitter aftertaste to the wine and beer, there is plenty of it. Make sure to roleplay the servants offering food and drink to the companions, so you can determine whether or not a particular character takes part in the feast.

The Ungracious Host

Once the feast is in full swing, 'Lockmand' arrives. He climbs theatrically up to the high table, then points to his throat, shrugs and shakes his head. *"He's lost his voice!"* shouts someone at the back of the hall. 'Lockmand' nods, then picks up one of the three purses of treasure. He mimes drawing a bow, then gives the purse to the winner of the archery contest. The pouch contains 5 points of Treasure. He then flexes his muscles and gives the second purse to the winner of the wrestling contest. Finally, he leaps onto the back of a passing servant and rides him around the stage like a horse, grabbing the third pouch as he passes and tossing it to the winner of the horse riding event. The crowd laughs. Bombur lets loose a great guffaw and rocks back on his couch, breaking it. He topples over backwards, and the crowd laughs even more.

Finally, 'Lockmand' goes to the chest and beckons everyone to come closer. He throws open the chest, digs his hands in and flings a shower of what was supposed to be golden coins into the crowd. He screams as he does so – the chest is full of snakes, not coins, and several just slithered down his sleeves and bit deep into his flesh. He falls to the ground, knocking his mask off, revealing the face of the jester Harrod.

- The snakes swarm everywhere, attacking in a panic. The companions can avoid being bitten by making **Athletics** or Weapons tests (TN 12) to dodge or kill any snakes that come nearby.

Poisoned!

The snakes are not the only calamity that strikes the feast. As warriors surge to their feet to avoid the swarming snakes, they suddenly feel dizzy and ill. Some collapse, others stumble. Any companions who ate or drank at the feast must spend 1 point of Hope to stay standing, and count as being Poisoned for the rest of the adventure.

Few of the victims of the poison drank a lethal dose, but most are incapacitated and cannot fight.

Curing the Poison

The poison in the wine can be cured with purgative herbs, but such herbs are rare in the north. A **Healing** test at TN 16 can restore a poisoned character to full health in a matter of hours, but there are only enough herbs in Dale to cure a handful of warriors. More herbs can be obtained in Mirkwood, but that will take several weeks.

Questioning Harrod

If the company manage to save Harrod from the snakes, they can question him. He is confused and terrified, and his story is jumbled.

> *"He, he said, it was just a joke! He's supposed to be here with the gold, and everyone should be laughing! Where is he? What's he done to me? Oh mercy, what has he done?"*

Tracking Down Lockmand

After sending the jester in disguise, Lockmand fled to a small boat that waited on the Running River. The companions are unlikely to be able to catch him, unless their suspicions were aroused earlier and they either got an extraordinary success while searching for him (see *Intrigue at the Feast*, above), or specifically headed for the river docks.

- If the players' actions put them on the right track well in advance, they reach the merchant as his boat casts off from the dock and heads down the river.

In the darkness, the company can see four figures on the deck. One is clearly Lockmand; the other three are nasty-looking warriors from the South. When they spot the characters, two warriors pick up bows from the deck and start firing arrows to dissuade pursuit.

Chasing Lockmand

The characters can either race along the riverbank, swim after the boat, or take other boats and row after it.

- If the companions race along the river, Lockmand's boat distances them easily and disappears in the dark.

- Swimming after Lockmand is actually not a good idea, as the waters of the River Running are very cold in November. The Loremaster should only allow companions with the *Swimming* speciality to actually try. Catching up with the boat is a prolonged test requiring six successful **Athletics** tests at TN 14. Should a swimmer fail a roll, he loses 5 Endurance points as he is briefly overcome by the freezing waters.

- If the companions can borrow a boat, they find that the river is fast-flowing and only barely navigable as its waters tumble from the Lonely Mountain; luckily, Lockmand's boat is weighed down by the heavy chest of gold, so the characters can catch up with the boat if they hurry. Chasing Lockmand on a boat is a prolonged test requiring six successful **Athletics** tests at TN 14; companions on the same boat can cooperate to accomplish the feat.

Shot in the Dark

The three southerners aboard Lockmand's boat shoot arrows in the direction of any pursuer. It is dark, and the boat is moving, so their shots are mainly aimed to discourage, not to kill.

- If a companion gets a result on any one roll while pursuing Lockmand, he is hit by an arrow for a loss of 5 Endurance points.

Fighting Lockmand's Guards

The guards keep firing their bows until the company board the boat, whereupon they draw swords and start hewing. The merchant is a craven coward and will not fight back; if his guards are overcome then he grabs the chest, throws it overboard and dives after it. The chest disappears quickly under the troubled waters, while Lockmand can be fished out of the waters at little or no effort.

Interrogating Lockmand

If captured, Lockmand reveals that he was sent to gather the best warriors in Dale in one place and poison them. An army is marching on Dale from the south. Doom is at hand – if King Bard surrenders and yields up his crown, then maybe his folk will be spared the suffering. Lockmand claims that his master commands *"...all the host of Dol Guldur – Orcs without number, men from the East, and a great host of Wights and Wargs"*. An **Insight** test reveals that Lockmand is lying about the size of the enemy army, and that he is simply trying to sap the morale of Dale.

Lockmand's Chest

The chest that the black traitor sent to the bottom of the river can become the object of a recovery mission, probably a very adventurous one, especially because the gold it contains came out of Dol Guldur. Unbeknown to the companions, the treasure is tainted by the touch of the Necromancer, and its malevolence it is sure to attract the attention of some of the most evil denizens of the Long Marshes, or even of the Mountains of Mirkwood...

- If recovered from the cold bed of the river, Lockmand's chest can be opened to reveal 25 points of Treasure. Anyone who takes a share of this treasure gains one point of Shadow automatically, and must pass a Corruption test with TN 16 or gain 3 additional points of Shadow.

- Part Four -
Raven's Tidings

By the next morning, Dale is afire with wild rumour. Tales of invasions, curses and poison are on everyone's lips. Some stories claim that everyone who was at the feast is dying. Others claim that it is the curse of the Dragon taking hold, or that it was the doing of the wicked Elvenking or those troublesome Dwarves or some other foe.

The Coming Foe

The next morning, a raven arrives in Dale. If any Dwarf companions in the group have the *Ravens of the Mountain* virtue, or a Barding has the Woeful Foresight virtue, then the raven comes to them. Otherwise, the raven alights on the roof of a bell tower and utters its doom to the townsfolk directly.

> *"Harken, men of Dale! Harken, folk of the Mountain! A terrible army approaches. Orcs and Goblins, with Wild Wolves to ride upon, coming with great speed up from the south. They ride for Dale!"*

A Royal Council

The companions are among those least affected by Lockmand's poison – many other warriors are unconscious or too weak to stand. Considering this, it is possible that they voluntarily propose to offer their help to King Bard. If they do not, they are summoned to his presence by one of his trusted men. The King can be encountered at the Royal Palace.

When they go there, they pass through the vaulted stone portal into the lamp-lit hall, and find Bard sitting grim-faced on his throne, with a map of his kingdom spread out in front of him. Normally, this hall would be attended by many heroes and warriors of Dale, but only a few managed to struggle from their sick-beds to attend council. There are, however, plenty of merchants and townsfolk here, demanding that the King acts to safeguard Dale against its enemies.

The companions are received with a welcoming nod from the King, who at this juncture is more than glad to see a group of armed adventurers join his council. The crowd of onlookers is less discreet, and the companions are greeted with a cheer as soon as they pass the gates of the palace.

This audience with the King is resolved as an Encounter. If the company are unable to convince the fearful townsfolk that they can save the kingdom, then panic and fear may bring Dale down before the enemy even arrives. Dale calls for aid – will the company answer?

Set Tolerance

The Tolerance for this encounter is based on the highest Valour amid the company, modified by a bonus of +2 for the emergency situation. Remember to consider any bonuses to Tolerance due to victories gained in the contests (see *The End of the Contest*, page 117).

- The Loremaster can evaluate the outcome of the encounter by keeping track of how many successful rolls are scored by the player-heroes. The final total will be used to gauge Bard's reactions (see *Interaction* below).

Introduction

The companions may choose to make their introduction in any way they see fit, but this is probably a time for **Awe**. The difficulty of the attempt depends also on the health of the company.

- Increase the default difficulty of any roll to TN 16 if at least half of the members of the company are at less than full Endurance. A speaker sees his TN raised another level if he is Wounded or Poisoned.

Interaction

King Bard addresses the council with a sober assessment of the situation.

"Lockmand's treachery has blunted the spear of the forces of Dale. The greater portion of our strength is lost until the poisoned warriors recover. And when they do, it will be too late."

"The power of the Orcs of the North was broken at the Battle of Five Armies, but Wilderland is still stiff with Wolves, Orcs, and creatures of the worst description. It must be assumed that we face a powerful army."

"The enemy's outriders will be here soon. Dale has the strength to resist a siege, but if we retreat behind its stone walls, then the farmlands and outlying villages – not to mention Lake-town – will be vulnerable to attack."

"We must resolve what to do with the remaining time. There are two concerns at hand – stopping the enemy, and preparing Dale for war, even in the lack of its best defenders."

When the King is done with his speech, Reinald, the chief of his advisors, asks those assembled for counsel. Various concerns and strategies are addressed below; if the companions do not suggest them, then Reinald himself or one of the other counsellors present does so.

Stopping the Enemy

Looking at the maps using **Battle** or **Lore** identifies the likely route of the enemy. They are coming out of the south and the River Running lies between them and Dale.

To reach the town, the enemy must either pass through Mirkwood (unlikely, as they would get lost and could not ride their mounts through the woods), or through the Long Marshes (impossible for an army).

Only the empty lands east of the marshes remain. However, there are few places for the enemy to cross the River Running to the east: the enemy must be making for the Crossings of Celduin: marked on the maps of King Bard across the blue ribbon of the river, a bridge crosses the Celduin two hundred miles south of Dale and almost one hundred miles east of Mirkwood, in the region known as the Nether Marches.

- A roll of **Lore** identifies the tiny tower drawn near the crossing markings as an outpost of the old kingdom of Dale, a tollgate perhaps. The map dates the settlement back to the time of Girion, son of King Bladorthin of Dale.

The Town of Celduin

The companions might desire to find out more about what lies at the Crossings of Celduin. Any Northman knows that there are settlements along the River Running, living relics out of a past when a powerful kingdom ruled those lands. Some might be abandoned, and some others might still be populated to this day. Sometimes, merchants from the south bring news and snippets of information, but usually everyone is too busy with their own lives to find interest in these matters. Traders from Lake-town might know more, and making a roll of Riddle while conversing with one might bear interesting fruits (*see Part Six* for details).

Seeking Help from Allies

While many of the best warriors of the Lonely Mountain are similarly afflicted by Lockmand's poison, Dáin will send help if asked. So too will the Elves of Mirkwood. However, a roll of **Persuade** is needed to convince the mistrustful townsfolk of this course of action – many fear that their allies will abandon them in their hour of need.

Preparing Dale

One of the merchants suggests that King Bard order all his subjects to take refuge behind the city walls, or to seek shelter within the Lonely Mountain. Another counsellor, a farmer, says that if they abandon the countryside to the enemy, the fields and orchards will burn and the harvest will be lost. Which course of action do the companions advocate? Whichever they choose, they must defend their decision with another *Personality* skill roll.

Stormcrows

Some wild rumours trouble the council, and should be put to rest. Who sent Lockmand? Everyone knows that he was close to the old Master of Laketown; maybe Lake-town is jealous of Dale's newfound prosperity? Some of Bard's counsellors suggest that the folk of Esgaroth may be behind the impending attack. Unless a companion

uses **Persuade** or **Inspire** to convince the Bardings to trust their neighbours, then they argue against King Bard's decision to call on Lake-town for aid.

Many fear that the poisoned warriors will continue to worsen until they die. A companion experienced in **Healing** or possessing the *Leechcraft* trait can assure the court that the poison is not necessarily fatal, and describe the course of purgative herbs needed to cure the afflicted.

Conclusions

If the companions didn't reduce the Tolerance of the encounter to zero, then the folk of Dale are convinced that, despite Lockmand's treachery, all hope is not lost, and Bard can concentrate on mustering his troops without interference.

For a more accurate assessment of how the company performed, compare the number of successful rolls the companions achieved during the episode with the entries given below.

1: Bard politely thanks the companions for their intervention, but privately dismisses any course of action they proposed as meaningless. This will teach him about admitting adventurers to his war council!

2-4: The King is worried, but sees an opportunity in these adventurers: he addresses them and the few others who are strong enough to travel and presents them with a plan (see the *King Bard's Command* box).

5-6: King Bard is greatly relieved, as the words of the companions plainly show him that not everything is yet lost! He proposes his plan as for 2-4 above, but gladly accepts suggestions and reasonable changes. Finally, he promises the companions a reward should they return victorious.

7+: King Bard is very impressed. Apply the results of 2-4 and 5-6 above; additionally, the King will consider the companions' admission to his restricted council of advisors should they return alive and victorious.

King Bard's Command

The King knows that it will take days for him to assemble a host mustering what forces are available from the lands surrounding Dale and the Mountain, and even weeks before reinforcements arrive from the Iron Hills and from Mirkwood, if they come at all. The enemy will probably arrive in less than two weeks, substantially less if they press on under the light of day. He needs time, so he intends to send the few healthy soldiers he has to rally the countryside around Dale and Esgaroth, and the company of adventurers to hold the crossings of the River Running against the enemy. A bridge is a very defensible place, one that can be held by a handful of valorous individuals. With luck, they will reach the river before the enemy can cross, and so give him time to muster a force large enough to meet the enemy in open battle. Bard does not expect the companions to hold out indefinitely – he just needs as much time as they can give him. He will not command them to go (unless they are sworn subjects of Dale), but he asks for their help in this time of need.

The Enemy is Coming! Save Yourselves!

If the companions exceed the Tolerance of the encounter, then the council has failed to quell the panic. Many start making plans to flee the city, while others spend time pointing fingers and assigning blame instead of preparing for the war. The added confusion means that it will take Bard longer to rally a defence.

- The companions will have to hold out for an added day in *Part Seven – The Battle of the Crossings*.

Greedy Adventurers

Haggling over payment in times such as these can hardly be considered behaviour worthy of a hero, so any companion who does so is considered to have committed a Misdeed (see page 224 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*) and gains automatically a Shadow point.

- Part Five -
The Journey South

King Bard provides the company with swift horses for the journey south. They are to ride with all speed to the Crossings of Celduin, and to hold the river against the enemy as best they can. Meanwhile, messengers are dispatched to the surrounding countryside, to the Iron Hills, the Woodland Realm and Esgaroth. Ravens too are sent bearing letters to the allies of Dale.

The Journey

The companions are to travel south to the Long Lake. Then, the company's path moves into less travelled regions. The wild lands between Esgaroth and the river are not uninhabited, but are home to little isolated farmsteads and herds of sheep and cows, and there are few villages of note. They head south-east, skirting the edge of the Long Marshes, and then strike across the countryside east of Mirkwood towards the region known as the Nether Marches, beyond where the Old Forest Road exits Mirkwood.

The first leg of the journey will see them ride from Dale to the southern borders of the Upper Marches. The second leg brings them first to the River Running and then to the Crossings of Celduin.

- The forty-league trip to where the River Running exits Mirkwood to turn east follows broken trails used by merchants. The journey takes five days if done on horseback. Each companion must make two Fatigue tests (TN 16).

- Once they reach the river, the companions ride for eighty miles over easy terrain, for two more days of travel. This requires another Fatigue test (TN 16).

Planning the Route

As usual, the companions are allowed to make preliminary rolls to plan their journey ahead.

From Dale to the Upper Marches

The journey from Dale to the Long Lake is easy and uneventful. The companions ride through the vales of the upper river, formerly the Desolation of the Dragon. In the years since Smaug's death, this land has become a bountiful garden, bringing forth vast harvests of fruit and grain. They charge past many small hamlets, all of which are newly built and have no defences worth mentioning. If the enemy makes it this far north, it will be disastrous.

The Upper Marches

From the Long Lake, the companions head across open countryside. The River Running becomes a silver ribbon off to their right, before it is lost behind trees and the mists of the marsh-fens. The land here is almost empty save for flocks of sheep and their herdsmen. The inhabitants of these lands are Northmen, kin to the Lake-men and Bardings; the King has dispatched messengers to bring words of warning to the areas surrounding Dale and Esgaroth, but it might take days for them to reach these places. The company could take time to seek out the herdsmen and warn them of the approaching army, but this would delay them. The herdsmen have some permanent villages, but they are not on the company's route. The company could search for a herdsman camp instead, but finding such a camp is not a certainty.

A Thief In The Night

If the company failed to capture Lockmand earlier, the company passes a boat on the river that is travelling south from Dale to Lake-town. The boat crew pass on a strange story. A few hours previously, they spotted another boat docked at the river bank. There were four men on board, three of whom were surly river-folk, but the third was a merchant dressed in rich clothes. They seemed to be arguing over a chest.

If the company investigate with Explore, then they find Lockmand's boat abandoned by the riverbank. Lying in the reeds nearby is the corpse of one of the guards. His throat has been cut. A roll of Hunting reveals tracks heading off east. If the company is determined to find the traitor they can pursue Lockmand and his two remaining guards.

Chasing down the treacherous merchant adds a day to the company's journey. The company overtake Lockmand as he tries to drag his pony out of the mud east of the river; the poor animal is weighed down by the chest of gold.

Sounding the Alarm

If the company choose to seek out the herdsmen, call for an **Explore** test (TN 12). Success means the company find a recently-travelled path and can follow it to a campsite where a dozen herders watch over their flocks. The herders are loyal to Dale, but only come to the valley for markets every few months. They have heard nothing of the impending danger.

- **Awe**, **Inspire** or **Persuade** can be used to convince the herdsmen that Dale needs their strength, too. If successful, the herdsmen agree to contact their kinsfolk and send help to Dale's muster. They are excellent archers and fighters, so their help will be welcome in Dale. If the test fails, then the herdsmen decide that their best course of action is to drive their herds north towards the Waste, and to look to their own homes first instead of defending Dale.

A Flock of Crows

A huge flock of crows flies overhead. It suddenly changes direction and closes in to circle once around the company. Then, the flock scatters, with big black birds flapping in every direction. A roll of **Awareness** (or bringing one down with a bow-shot) lets the company see that these are nasty gore-crows out of Mirkwood. A companion with the Beast-lore or other applicable Trait can say that such behaviour in birds is very suspicious: it was as though the crows were sent to spy or scout the area. In the distance, the company see other flocks of such crows.

From the Upper Marches to the Bridge

Upon encountering the Running River again as it exits Mirkwood, the company turns east. The final part of the journey winds its path around rolling hills and river vales. These lands are empty indeed, although the company pass barrows and fallen stones that once marked the dwelling places of long-dead chieftains in time immemorial.

Hazards Suggestions

Here are some suggestions for Hazard episodes taking place in this region. The greatest hazard the company faces right now is delay.

Riding Accident (Any Companion)
The character's horse puts a foot wrong and stumbles. The character must make an **Athletics** test to avoid his horse being lamed. If the horse is lamed, then the companion must travel at a slower rate (30 miles per day instead of 40). Do the rest of the company wait for their slower companion, or do they split up?

Treacherous Ground (Guide - Wrong Choices)
Heavy rain has fallen for an entire day, and the terrain ahead is now muddy and dangerous. The Guide makes a **Travel** test to find a drier path. On a failure, the difficulty of their next **Travel** test is increased by one level (TN +2).

Spooked Horses (Look-out - Dangerous Meeting)
At night, a flock of gore-crows swoops down and attacks the company's horses, scaring them. The Look-outs must drive the crows off with a **Hunting** roll or calm or catch the horses with **Athletics** before the terrified animals flee. If all heroes fail their test and at least one roll gets a result, the company have lost their mounts.

The Raiders

The company are not alone in this land. While the approaching army is still south of the river, a few bands of Orcs and Wolves from the Mountains of Mirkwood have left the forest to meet the coming host. One such band comes across the company as they make camp.

- Call for an **Awareness** roll from the Look-outs to spot the enemy well in advance: Orcs and Wargs are a loud lot, and they are thrilled by the prospect of joining the invading host!

If the company is made aware of their presence, the companions can try to ambush the Orcs. If the Look-outs fail, then they may be the ones ambushed – see page 167 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game* for details. There is one Orc Soldier and a Wild Wolf for each member of the company.

Eavesdropping

If the company has time to eavesdrop on the Orcs, or take one of the brutes prisoner, they can learn something about their enemy from their excited comments (unfortunately, the Wargs speak among themselves only using their dreadful language and nothing can be gleaned from their growls and howls...):

- They have left their dens under the Mountains of Mirkwood because the 'gibbet boss' has sent word to leave the forest at once and meet the army at the crossings of the river. He is claiming that the time for revenge has come for all those who suffered by the hands of Elves, Men and Dwarves!

- Most of the army is still well south of the river, and some of the Orcs grumble that by the look of it there won't be enough of them to beat the Bardings *and* the Dwarves *and* the Elves all at the same time. The 'gibbet boss' has been able to draw all those who found refuge in Mirkwood out of the holes they had hidden in since the Battle of Five Armies, but, as one of the Orcs points out, they've less than a third of the troops that were there at the time. And for all the promises of the 'gibbet boss' about his dark magic, what counts is still Goblin-feet on the battlefield.

- The 'gibbet boss' is a ghost or a wraith out of Dol Guldur, who speaks through the dead. Other Orcs are cheered by this, and are convinced that they'll be joined on the battlefield by an 'army of wights'. Others cynically argue that the gibbet boss will leave them in the lurch.

- There is only one place where the army can cross safely – the bridge at the crossings. The waters of the River Running are too cold and fast for an army to swim across.

- Part Six -
The Calm Before The Storm

As the company approaches the Crossings of Celduin, even from a distance they can make out its narrow stone bridge arching across the river. Somewhat unexpectedly, they see a town sitting on its northern bank, with houses clustered around a fortified tollgate built at the end of the bridge.

The Town

There has been a small village here by the bridge across the River Running for as long as men have travelled this path. Celduin takes its name from the Elven name for the river. It is currently home to around one hundred people, including some twenty men of fighting age. Its inhabitants are a proud and independent folk of Northmen who collect tolls from anyone who wants to cross the bridge.

Most buildings in Celduin resemble those of the town of Dale, at least those that have been rebuilt following the style of the old days. The bridge is different though, as it was built by Men from the South centuries ago, when a steady traffic of traders and merchants used to cross it on their way north, and it is only maintained by the inhabitants of Celduin.

Celduin

1. The Bridge: The bridge across the Celduin is made of white stone. It is kept in good repair, although the craft of the Men of the South cannot be replicated. The bridge is wide enough for two riders to go abreast, or for a single cart. Three men on foot could hold the bridge against many.

2. Tollgate: This two-storey fortification blocks unwanted travellers from crossing the bridge with a great iron portcullis. The upper level contains the wheels for raising and lowering the portcullis, and also has a number of arrow-slits and murder-holes to attack those who would threaten the bridge. A narrow ladder leads up to the roof of the building.

3. The Inn at the Crossings: This is a large, stone-walled inn built to shelter travellers on the road. This is the second strongest building in town, and would make an excellent fall-back position or command post for the company.

4. Master's House: This is where the Master of Celduin lives. His house is bigger than any of the other dwellings in town.

5. Docks: More merchants pass through Celduin by the river than by the road, and the number of boats has increased steadily in the last five years.

6. The River Running: The fast-flowing River Running is not easily fordable here; crossing the river is a prolonged action, requiring six **Athletics** tests.

The Master of Celduin

When the company arrives in town, the adventurers are welcomed by a crotchety, half-blind old man named

Celduin

Erik, son of Erland. He is led by two young maidens of about twelve years of age, Erik's twin granddaughters Eydis and Erna.

Erik is the current Master of Celduin, as was his father Erland before him, and his grandfather Egil before that. While the holder of the office of Master is chosen by the villagers, it has been in Erik's family for many generations.

Since the death of Smaug, news of the crowning of King Bard have reached the town, to the dismay of old Erik: he worries that the influence of Dale will diminish his own power, and that in time the people of Celduin will look towards the new king in the north and not towards his household for leadership. Therefore, he strongly objects to any interference from the adventurers.

Playing the Master

You're old, proud and cranky. Young people these days are always rushing around, talking about doom and dire portents and things being in thrall to other things and Dragons and Necromancers. Pay no attention to their nonsense. The only important thing is keeping the bridge open, the tolls collected, and Celduin under your thumb.

Set Tolerance

The Master respects Valour, so the Tolerance for the encounter begins equal to the highest Valour in the group. Reduce the Tolerance by one if there are any Bardings or Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain in the group.

- The Loremaster can evaluate the outcome of the encounter with Erik by keeping track of how many successful rolls are scored by the player-heroes.

Introduction

The Master demands **Courtesy** from visitors, especially in front of his two granddaughters. If the company try to bluster past him by shouting about an invading army, he deliberately drags his heels to show that he is the one in charge in Celduin.

Interaction

The Master of Celduin takes the news about an approaching army with surprising calm.

"So? I am no vassal of Dale. If whoever leads this army is willing to pay the toll, why should I deny them the use of the bridge?"

The Master is no fool, and has no reasons to doubt the words of the adventurers: if they are saying that it is Orcs who are coming, then it's probably true. However, his duty is to protect the people of his village, and if the best way to do that is to let the Orcs past without a fight, then so be it! The village has only a handful of armed guards, and he fears that Celduin will be wiped out if they resist. The characters may argue that if Dale falls, so too will Celduin; the Master agrees, but says that if they offer him a choice between seeing Celduin falling after Dale and Celduin falling first, then he must pick the option that preserves the town for as long as possible.

The companions can try to convince the Master to aid them as they see fit. Here are some examples:

- If they try to convince Erik that there is a hope of holding off the enemy, they can try with **Inspire** (TN 16, as the old man resents the empty boasts of warriors).

- Arguing that Celduin is lost no matter what – but if they fight back, then they buy time for the people of Celduin to flee and for Bard to gather his forces, is a plea that falls on deaf ears.

- They may try to move him with promises using **Persuade** (TN 16). If the Master helps them protect Dale, then King Bard will certainly reward him, possibly even adding Celduin to the Kingdom of Dale and making Erik the first Lord of Celduin.

- Alternatively, they can bypass the master entirely and appeal to the people of Celduin with **Inspire** or **Song** (TN 16).

At the end of the encounter, compare the number of successful rolls achieved during the episode (including the Introduction) with the entries given below.

1: Erik is not really convinced by the words of the companions. He feigns acceptance, and secretly starts preparing a plan: he intends to sell the companions to the enemy, possibly sending one of his sons as a messenger (see below).

2-4: The Master agrees to help, albeit very grudgingly. He puts the defence of Celduin in the hands of the company, but will continually interfere with what the companions are trying to do: the TN of all rolls made to prepare the village for the coming battle is raised by one level (TN +2).

5+: The Master resigns the control of Celduin, trusting the companions with its defence. He keeps busy preparing all non-combatants to evacuate the town.

I am the Master here!

As indicated above, if the companions fail to convince the Master he proceeds with a plan: when the first wave of attackers arrives at nightfall, he sends one of his sons to greet the Orcs and declare that Celduin remains neutral in their war on Dale. The Orcs laugh and one of them skewers the Master's son on his spear, then kicks the body off the bridge into the River Running. *"We take what we want,"* shouts the Orc. *"You will be our slaves!"*

Preparations for Battle

The companions can now prepare for the battle to come. They can study the battleground and prepare the available defences. The paragraphs below list some rolls that can be attempted by the companions to successfully set up the fight.

- For every successful roll, the company gains a bonus Success die for each companion; these dice will be added to those that the adventurers will eventually receive during Onset, when combat advantages will be determined (see page 170 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*).

The Tollgate

The key to any defence of the town is the tollhouse. The portcullis is well maintained, but the iron gates that should close behind it are rusted open.

- A **Craft** test (TN 16) can repair the gates for a bonus Success die.

Train Combatants

There are some twenty men of fighting age in the town, but only a dozen or so have weapons and armour and the training to use them.

- Up to two companions can roll **Battle** to give basic training in archery for another bonus die.

Send Explorers

Scouting on the south side of the river lets the company spy on the approaching enemy.

- On a successful **Explore** roll, they spot an advance party composed of Orcs, Wargs, and Orcs riding on Wolves approaching ahead of the main body of the enemy force, with a vanguard trailing them and the main host marching behind. Being able to prepare for these three waves of foes gives the company one Success die.

Collapsing the Bridge

Collapsing the bridge is possible, but extremely difficult. A character would have to swim out into the middle of the river (requiring three Athletics tests) and then smash down the weaker central pillar of the bridge. Doing so requires several hours' work and four Craft test at TN 16 to weaken the bridge enough to collapse it.

If the company do collapse the bridge, then the enemy is halted, until they find that they can still ford the river to the east of the town, where the water is shallower, by having Orcs and Trolls throw stones and debris to create a ford: the delay buys the company extra time, corresponding to three additional Success dice.

- Part Seven -
The Battle Begins

The enemy reaches the River Running nine days after the company left Dale (two days after they reached Celduin, if they didn't tarry). The sun sets over the Mountains of Mirkwood, falling into the shadowy embrace of the forest. The few defenders prepare for the enemy assault.

From across the river to the south, the company hear the howling of wolves grow louder and louder. Where do the companions make their stand?

On The Bridge

The bridge is narrow enough for two or three characters to hold the bridge and block any enemies advancing across it. A character who suffers knockback on the bridge may be thrown over the side into the river.

The Tollhouse, Ground Floor

Companions using spears can stand behind the portcullis and thrust their weapons through the gaps at any enemies who get too close. Characters standing behind the portcullis count as fighting in an Open stance, but can choose to only attack or be attacked with ranged or thrusting weapons.

The Tollhouse, Upper Floor

The upper floor has the mechanisms to raise and lower the portcullis. The arrow-slits in this room give a commanding view of the bridge and the banks of the river. A narrow ladder leads up to the roof.

The Tollhouse, Roof

Archers on the roof can fire arrows at enemies on the bridge or banks of the river. The trapdoor from the roof leads down to the upper floor.

Banks of the Celduin

Swimming the river requires an **Athletics** test to avoid being swept away. Climbing out of the river is easy enough, and does not require a test, but a character cannot attack while clambering out of the water and up the muddy banks.

The Town

If the enemies break into the town, the companions can take shelter in the wooden huts or the stone buildings.

Inventive defending

The players will probably come up with all sorts of plans for the defence of the town and its bridge. You should reward their good ideas with tangible rewards. For example, companions who take up positions at arrow slits or battlements could be harder to hit, giving their opponents a difficulty TN of 18 or 20. Maybe the TN is lower if they take to the battlements rather than the arrow slits below, but the greater height means that their weapons gain range and they can make an additional ranged attack as the enemy closes? If the companions can find some nails and have the time and ability to improvise caltrops, their enemies might take some damage as they cross the bridge. Encouraging and rewarding ingenuity will help bring the encounter to life for your players and lead to a memorable battle, fondly recalled around the fireplace in Fellowship phases to come!

The First Assault - Orcs and Wargs

A host of Orcs and Wargs comes first, with the smaller goblins riding upon the bigger Wolves and scrambling down the valley slope towards the bridge. Heroes possessing the *Shadow-lore* Trait or an appropriate *Enemy-lore* (Orcs or Wolves) recognise them as Orcs and Wolves of the Mountains, probably veterans of the Battle of Five Armies searching for retribution.

Their leader stops in front of the tollhouse, protecting himself with a tall Barding shield defaced by bloody smears. It's a big Orc-chieftain with red burning eyes: he observes the defenders and then sounds his hunting horn.

"Open yer gates, maggots, or you'll hang from them!"

Assuming the gates stay closed, then the outriders charge across the bridge in a horrific sight of slashing fangs and black fur. Some of them make mad leaps from

the end of the bridge to the river-bank, while others stop in front of the tollhouse where the Orcs start scaling the outer walls, hoping to climb to the upper storey of the building and open the portcullis and gates from within.

Fighting the First Assault

There are a dozen Orc Soldiers and as many Wild Wolves, plus their leader, an Orc-Chieftain accompanied by a Wolf Leader.

Four Orc Soldiers try scaling the walls of the tollhouse, while the other eight leap off the end of the bridge and try to reach the bank. The Orcs climbing the tollhouse reach the topmost level in three combat rounds, and then try to storm the upper level and open the portcullis.

If they open the portcullis (and, if they were repaired, the gates), then the wolves on the bridge swarm through into the town.

Defeating the Orcs and Wargs

Once the companions have killed or driven off half the enemies, the remainder either flee or are brought down by the other defenders of the village. The company have some four hours to rest before the next wave of attackers arrives. They can use this time to bind their wounds, recover spent arrows, rally their troops, or improve the defences of the village.

The Second Assault - Hill-troll

Four hours after the first wave, in the black of night, a monster over ten feet tall lumbers silently into view. The Gibbet King has summoned a Hill-troll out of Mordor, to bring destruction to the North!

The monster seems covered by thick scales, and carries a black buckler in one knotted hand and a heavy hammer in the other. He is escorted by a dozen Goblin Archers, whose main purpose seems to direct the Troll towards the bridge.

One of the goblins points at the river and yelps something at the Hill-troll. The monster suddenly bellows thunderously as if in answer, and charges towards the bridge, raising its titanic weapon to smash the tollhouse down.

- All companions must now make a Fear test, as the creature's beastly onslaught strikes fear into their hearts (reduce the creature's Hate score by one point).

Fighting the Hill-troll

The Hill-troll is a very tough opponent. If allowed to attack the tollhouse, it needs to accumulate three successful Hammer attacks on the portcullis (five, if the iron doors were repaired). A great success counts as two successes, an extraordinary one as three. If attacked, the stone troll

ignores its attackers until it is reduced to half its starting Endurance, or until it is wounded.

If the Hill-troll succeeds in breaking down the tollhouse and opening the bridge, then the Goblins swarm across the bridge and into the town.

The Goblins

While their Hill-troll champion hammers at the tollhouse, the goblins stay on the south side of the river and fire arrows into the town. Some of these arrows are dipped in pitch and set alight to burn the thatched roofs of the cottages; others are soiled with poison. The goblins are cowards, and will not cross the bridge until the way is clear. They flee if the Hill-troll is brought down.

- Part Eight -
The Last Day

The next day dawns with a pale grey light, and grim clouds hang low over the town. There is an air of impending doom and the joy of the victories of the previous night melts away when the townfolk see the damage and the carnage in the full light of day. Worse, to the south, the company can see the enemy army approaching, seemingly as numberless as a tide of ants.

With the defeat of the Hill-troll, the companions have several hours to consider their situation. How have the defenders of Celduin fared? If the company drove off the Orcs and the Troll without too much damage, then most of the defenders are still alive. If the company took wounds, then many of the defenders were also severely injured or slain.

If the company sends scouts, they find no sign of any army coming from the north. To the south, across the river, they see the enemy host preparing for battle. The final attack will come tonight. The Master of Celduin suggests that they have done all they can, and that they should flee the town before the enemy attacks again.

Fleeing the Town

The company might at this point consider abandoning Celduin. As far as their mission is concerned they have partially succeeded: they have bought Dale enough time to gather an army, but not enough for King Bard to muster his full strength. The battle that will ensue will be much bloodier than it would otherwise be.

But there is the safety of the villagers of Celduin to consider: if the companions flee without making sure the town won't fall prey to the bloodlust of the Orcs, they will later discover that the Master didn't succeed in buying the lives of his subjects in exchange for safe passage, and that Celduin was burned and pillaged. Having left the villagers alone counts as a Misdeed, and all the companions deserve at least 2 Shadow points for it (see page 224 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game* for further directions).

The Wounded Warrior

A woman of Celduin named Amadisa approaches the member of the company with the best **Healing** skill. Her young husband Beoric was struck by a goblin-arrow in the last fight, and he needs help. She leads the companion into the inn, where Beoric lies on a table. Examining the warrior yields a grim result – he is dying, and all that can be done is to make his last hours comfortable. The arrow penetrated his bowels and no surgery could hope to save him. Beoric is delirious with pain and fever, so Amadisa sits by his side and whispers prayers to whatever powers will listen.

The Raven

When the sun starts to set, look-outs spot a black dot in the northern skies, almost invisible in the dying light. Some of the more fearful townsfolk whisper that it is the Dragon returned, but as it comes closer, the company see that it is just a raven from the Mountain. The bird starts to descend towards the town – and then a flight of black darts shoots from across the river - Orc scouts were hiding from the sun close to the river banks, and just emerged to bring down the bird! The raven is hit by

one of the darts, and bloody black feathers rain down on Celduin as the bird plummets to the ground. The Goblin Archers yell in triumph, and run to hide again among the reeds and rushes.

- Call for **Awareness** tests: if someone succeeds (or if a companion has *Keen-sight*) they notice that the raven carried a small roll of parchment and let it fall. It was carried briefly by the wind, to finally drop into the waters of the river.

If the companions recover the parchment (a hero with the *Swimming* speciality is required, or a roll of **Athletics**), they discover that it bears the unbroken sigil of King Bard. The message it carries is still readable:

Dale marches south with Esgaroth and the Dwarves of the Mountain! Hold the river through the night. At dawn, look to the North.

Thus Quoth the Raven

If the companions search the area where the raven fell, they find him dying, neatly skewered by the Orc-arrow. There is nothing the companions can do but listen to his last words:

"I am Korun, son of Roäc. I have at last reached the end of my days. Listen to my counsel! Fight the shadow with fire, or water. A foresight is on me, I am warning you."

Voices in the Dark

When the night falls, the villagers of Celduin light lanterns and torches, and ignite bonfires close to the river banks, to better watch for the advancing enemy. But as the preparations for the coming battle draw to a conclusion, the wounded warrior Beoric dies. He shudders as he draws his last breath, then slumps back down on the table. There is a long moment of silence, broken only by his widow's weeping.

Then the corpse stirs. An unnatural light blooms in Beoric's dead eyes, and his cold lips part as a lifeless voice emerges. The Gibbet King has taken Beoric's body as its mouthpiece, and it addresses the company. Any characters who played through *Those Who Tarry No Longer* or *A Darkness in the Marshes* instantly recognises the horrible voice of the spirit.

"Fools! You think Bard the Bowman is coming to save you? Dale is afire, abandoned by Elf and Dwarf alike. No help is coming to you. No hope is left to you. Yield!"

The spirit knows that its forces need to cross the Celduin tonight if it is to catch Dale unawares, so it tries to demoralise the player-heroes.

- The spirit's baleful influence forces everyone to immediately make a Corruption test (TN 14) or gain one Shadow point. Worse, the company must keep making such tests (gaining 1 Shadow Point on a failed test) until one of the company speaks up and defies the spirit, succeeding in a **Awe** test and breaking the spell of its evil words.

Once one of the company defies the spirit, it leaves Beoric's body. The dead man falls back and remains still. From outside, the company hear the sound of war-horns.

The Final Assault - Orcs & Worse Things

In the light of hundreds of torches and fires, an army of Orcs swarms across the bridge, if it still stands. If the bridge has collapsed, then they hurl themselves into the river and struggle across, driven by terror of the thing behind them. There are more Orcs than can easily be counted, but the company is outnumbered by at least ten to one.

All are Orc Soldiers, Orc Guards and Goblin Archers. Judging from the devices on their shields, a companion with the appropriate Traits can identify the bulk of the host as fierce Orcs out of southern Mirkwood, reinforced by the survivors of the Battle of Five Armies and Northeners from the Misty Mountains.

Playing the Onslaught

There is no time for tactics; keep throwing Orcs at the company. For every Orc that falls, another two take its place. The company need to hold out for twelve combat rounds against the Orcs, by whatever means they can, or until two members of the company are wounded, knocked out or slain.

- For every round of combat, roll the Feat die once for every companion: on any number, the companion must face an Orc Soldier, on a ᚹ, a Goblin Archer, on an 👁, an Orc Guard.

It is not necessary to keep track of the opponents: roll the die again at the beginning of each new round (the opponent of the previous round disappears in the chaotic mess of the melee…).

The Gibbet King Comes

Once twelve rounds of combat have elapsed, a new horror appears on the far side of the river. In the wavering light, the companions see a wooden cart, drawn by a pair of black horses. On the cart stands an iron cage, a gibbet containing a rotting human corpse, little more than a skeleton held together with blackened sinews and rags. The same unholy light that was in Beoric's eyes dances in the skeleton's eye-sockets.

- The skeleton raises one bony hand and points it at the strongest member of the company, uttering a *Dreadful Spell*: that character must make a Corruption test (TN 14); if he fails, he gains 1 Shadow Point and is frozen to the spot, paralysed and unable to defend or attack for a number of rounds equal to his current Shadow score, unless he spends a Hope point (he must spend a point for each action he attempts).

The skeleton in the cart is the current host body of the Gibbet King, the torturer and jailer of the Necromancer of Dol Guldur. Normally perceived by mortals only as a malevolent shadow, he needs a body to command its followers and affect the material world. Destroying the Gibbet King's body will not destroy him, but it will momentarily banish him.

If the bridge still stands, then the cart rattles down the slope towards the tollhouse. The spirit exerts its power on the portcullis, causing the iron wheels to slowly grind backwards and the portcullis to rise as the cart approaches. The company's best chance of victory is to launch a last-ditch attack on the spirit itself, ideally with fire or water, as the last words of the raven suggested.

Attacking the Gibbet King

The cart carrying the Gibbet King is not especially protected, as the Orcs themselves fear to be near it. But to get to it, the companions still need to cut their way through the raging battle.

- As before, roll the Feat die once every round for each companion trying to reach the Gibbet King. If a companion hits his opponent with a great or extraordinary success, then he can additionally take a swing at the Gibbet King (an almost stationary target).

Moreover, companions fighting in a Rearward stance can make ranged attacks at the cart, or throw torches upon it (see below).

Fighting the Spirit with Fire

The companions can try to set the cart carrying the Gibbet King on fire: to do so, they can throw torches or shoot flaming arrows against it.

- To throw a torch upon the cart, a hero must spend his round to make an **Athletics** skill roll. Shooting a flaming arrow raises the TN of a **Bow** roll by one level (TN +2).

A torch burns for 3 points of Endurance every round, while a flaming arrow burns for 5 Endurance a round. The cart starts burning when it has taken 25 points of Endurance worth of fire damage. From that moment on, the Gibbet King starts losing 10 points of Endurance from fire damage every round; additionally, every round, the Gibbet King must also pass a Protection test against TN 16 or suffer a Wound (as for the Fire damage rules on page 184 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*).

Fighting the Spirit with Water

Another way to destroy the host body of the Gibbet King could be to throw the cart into the Running River. Parts of its waters pass along the Woodland Realm (the Forest River) and carry with them some of the benevolence of the Fair Folk, a bane for creatures such as the Gibbet King...

If the cart is upon the bridge, it takes a prolonged action requiring 8 **Athletics** rolls against TN 16 and allowing for cooperation to push it over the edge (inventive players will certainly propose different ways to accomplish the same feat).

Once his host body is immersed in the waters of the River Running, the Gibbet King loses its grip on the material world and is forced to flee.

The Gibbet King

Attribute Level	
8	
Endurance	Hate
55	8
Parry	Armour
5	3d
Skills	
Personality, 4	Survival, 1
Movement, 1	Custom, 3
Perception, 4	Vocation, 2
Special Abilities	
Dreadful Spells	Feast on Suffering
Bewilder	Thing of Terror

The Gibbet King does not attack his enemies physically, but every round he targets a companion, either with *Dreadful Spells* or *Bewilder*, to open them to the retaliation of his slaves.

Dreadful Spells: As previously indicated, the target of such a spell must make a Corruption test (TN 14); if he fails, he gains 1 Shadow Point and is frozen to the spot, paralysed and unable to defend or attack for a number of rounds equal to his current Shadow score, unless he spends a Hope point (he must spend a point for each action he attempts).

Feast on Suffering: The Gibbet King gains a point of Hate whenever a companion is Wounded or reduced to 0 Endurance.

If the Gibbet King is Defeated

Destroying the Gibbet King's body by sword, fire or water scatters the Orc-host. Terrified by the loss of their master, they retreat back south or else flee the battle. The bulk of the army is still on the south bank, so the enemy forces are not wholly broken, but the defeat of the Gibbet King significantly slows the invasion.

If the Company is Overrun

If the company are unable to defeat the Gibbet King, or if they are overwhelmed by the Orcs, then a kind Loremaster can pull them out of the fire by having a group of outriders from Dale arrive, led by Elstan. The First Captain of Dale charges, scattering the Orcs long enough for the company to gather themselves and flee.

The Army of the North

King Bard and his allies meet the Orc-host somewhere south of Dale. Whether the company was successful in holding the bridge or not, the Free Folk of the North are once again victorious – but the amount of time bought by the deeds of the companions heavily influences the nature of this victory.

The Companions were Defeated on the First Night (defeated in Part Seven)

The Gibbet King crosses the River Running early and pushes his army north. Bard is able to meet the enemy forces only when they are already inside the borders of the Upper Marches. The King of Dale is victorious and the Orc-army is scattered, but raiders plague the local farmsteads for months to come. The battle itself is costly and calamitous: of those who marched forth from Dale, less than a third march back home. Bard himself suffers a terrible wound. This will be remembered as a black day for many years to come.

- The companions are rewarded with 3 points of Treasure each, and a single bonus Experience point.

The Companions held the Crossings of Celduin for one Night (defeated in Part Eight)

The Orc-host crosses the Celduin and Bard is able to intercept them several miles north of the river, fortunately still outside the most populated areas. The battle is bloody, but in the end the Orcs break and flee. If they weren't led by their dark master, the Orcs might have been routed, for Bard and his men to pursue them and put an end to their menace once and for all. Alas! The Free Folk of the North must be content with a smaller victory.

- The companions are rewarded with 5 points of Treasure each, and 2 bonus Experience points.

The Companions held the Crossings of Celduin for two Nights (victorious in Part Eight)

King Bard reaches Celduin on the morning after the second night of battle. His host crosses the bridge at the Crossings amid the cheers of the exhausted villagers, and falls upon the Orcs before they reorganize themselves. Warriors from Dale, archers from Lake-town and many stout dwarven warriors from the Mountain and the Iron Hills utterly crush the enemy and win a glorious victory.

- The companions are rewarded with 10 points of Treasure each, and 3 bonus Experience points.

Aftermath

There is one curious and worrisome footnote to the whole affair. Among all the combatants who participated and survived the battle, no one brings back news of the Gibbet King. It is as though the spirit has once again vanished into shadow...

There is no time for a Fellowship phase after this adventure – the company have a few days to recover before *The Watch on the Heath* begins.

- the watch - on the heath

- **When:** This adventure takes place shortly after *The Crossings of Celduin*. There is no time for a Fellowship phase between the two quests.

- **Where:** The company returns to Dale after their defence of the bridge over the Celduin. While the Orcs who served the Gibbet King were defeated, the spirit itself is still at large. From Erebor, the company travel across the Waste into the mountains of the north, and the edge of the Withered Heath.

- **What:** The company are sent to an abandoned dwarven watchtower to investigate.

- **Why:** Before betraying the warriors of Dale, the merchant Lockmand visited the Lonely Mountain and consulted with certain ancient records held in the vaults there. His interest in the old watchtower seemed innocent, but it must conceal a sinister purpose.

- **Who:** The chief foe of this tale is the Gibbet King itself, a spirit of growing power who plots to seize control of a Dragon and rain destruction on the Free Folk of the North.

Adventuring Phase

This adventure is divided into six parts.

Part One - Council Under The Mountain

The company are called to Dáin's seat under the Mountain, where he tells them of certain recent troubling events, and commands them to investigate.

Part Two - Across the Trackless Waste

The company set forth from the Lonely Mountain and face the perils of the Waste. There, they meet a strange creature called Witherfinger, who knows much of what transpires in the region.

If the company can win her favour, she can help them in their quest.

Part Three - The Grey Mountains

Monsters slumber in the foothills of the Grey Mountains, and the company must tread warily as they find their way to the watchtower.

Part Four - Zirakinbar

The company arrive at the ancient watchtower, and discover that a dire plan is afoot.

Part Five - The Scourge of the North

The companions have the chance to meet Raenar, the plunderer, and strike an uneasy alliance (or die a dolorous death).

Part Six - The Watchtower

Wherein the tower carved on the peak of Zirakinbar is described, and the nefarious plans of the Gibbet King discussed.

Epilogue - A Renewed Spring of Joy

If the companions defeat the Gibbet King, they will have bought Wilderland a few years of prosperity, and finally concluded a threat that started plaguing them long before.

- Part One - Council Under The Mountain

The army of Dale marches home. Whether they have come back in glory, or on their shields, the warriors of the town are welcomed back by their families and friends. The new kingdom has survived another trial, another attack by the forces of darkness. Dale endures.

There are no feasts to celebrate this victory, for it was bought at great cost. Help has come from both the halls of Thranduil and from far Rhosgobel to attend to those poisoned by Lockmand or wounded in battle, so all the company are rapidly restored to full health (full Endurance and any Wounds healed).

A Secret Summoning

A few days after the battle, the company are contacted by a Dwarf wearing a grey hood. He bows low and introduces himself as Ori, one of the companions of Thorin Oakenshield. (If the company played through *The Marsh Bell* and rescued his kinsman Óin, then Ori knows the companions by reputation already and greets them warmly).

Ori is a well-travelled and personable Dwarf, friendly even to Elves, and often serves King Dáin as an ambassador and diplomat. Today, though, his mission is more secretive, and he wears a humble, travel-stained cloak (the very same cloak, in fact, that he wore on the Quest of Erebor some years ago) over his fine clothes.

- Ori informs the company that King Dáin wishes to speak with them under the Mountain. He has ponies and horses waiting outside, and the company should come immediately.

To Erebor

On the road that from Dale leads to the gate of the Lonely Mountain, the companions pass many Dwarves returning home from the battle, or busy at work on the ancient road that leads between the two cities. Soon, the company reaches the great cliff-wall where the River Running springs out of the Mountain. Leaving their mounts there, Ori leads them through the Front Gate, into a maze of wide passages, high chambers and halls. Inside the Dwarven fastness, a veritable army of craftsmen are hard at work, and the corridors echo with the din of hammers and chisels.

After a while, the companions lose count of the downward stairs and sloping passages they have passed, and know simply that they must be deep into the roots of the Lonely Mountain. They pass the vast chamber where Smaug lay atop his fabulous hoard — something of the Dragon lingers there, a trace of sulphur and greed and heat that will never be washed away.

The company are led past the hall down into deeper tunnels. Smaug never despoiled this particular section of the Mountain; he could smell there was no gold down here, and the few Dwarves who did take refuge in this warren of tunnels found themselves trapped here in the darkness, and they starved to death.

Finally, Ori brings the company to a stone door, marked with dwarf-runes. He pushes it open, leading them into the Chamber of Mazarbul under Erebor — the Chamber of Records of the Dwarves of the Mountain. Inside the wide rectangular hall waits Dáin Ironfoot, Lord of the Iron Hills and King under the Mountain.

An Audience with King Dáin

Dáin is a stern and proud Dwarf, perhaps the greatest warrior of the line of Durin in this age of the world. A crown of *mithril* glitters on his head, but on his feet he still wears the iron-banded shoes of a miner. Also in the chamber is a third Dwarf, whose white beard stretches down to the floor. This is one of Dáin's counsellors, a sage named Munin.

Set Tolerance

In this matter, Dáin values Wisdom. He mistrusts Elves, so reduce the Tolerance by one if an Elf does the talking. Remember to add the Standing rating of any Dwarves in the group.

- The Loremaster can weigh the outcome of the encounter by keeping track of how many successful rolls are scored by the companions. The final total is used to evaluate the reactions of King Dáin (see *Interaction* below).

Introduction

While this is not a formal audience, Dáin is a stickler for formality. The company should each introduce themselves using **Awe** or **Courtesy**. Normally, **Courtesy** would be the better option, but as the characters are fresh from the battlefield, Dáin will accept the boasting of warriors who want to use **Awe** instead.

Interaction

King Dáin begins by giving a short account of recent events in Erebor.

"Last year, we received the visit of a merchant from Lake-town. He bore letters of introduction from the Master of Esgaroth, and presented himself by the name of Lockmand."

"He had a treasure to trade with us, a shield that once belonged to Thrór, the grandfather of Thorin Oakenshield. The shield had passed from Thrór to his son Thráin, and it was believed lost since when Thráin disappeared in Mirkwood one hundred years ago. Lockmand claimed to have bought the shield in a market in the far south."

"In exchange for the shield, Lockmand wanted payment in gold, and a fair price was arranged. He also asked, as a favour, for a look in our records. He claimed to be a buyer and seller of treasures and relics, and he hoped that the old books might contain information useful to him. But we do not let foreigners easily in our Chamber of Records, and we deliberated for some time before finally refusing his request."

At this point, Munin takes over the tale. He introduces himself as the keeper of records.

"One night, I was awoken by strange sounds coming from the Hall of Mazarbul. I descended to investigate, and whatever-it-was fled before I could see it. I searched the vaults, but found nothing amiss, and then I soon forgot the matter."

At this point, Munin hangs his head in shame.

"The truth is that I was not diligent enough. One book was out of place, and I did not notice. It was only when news reached the Mountain of Lockmand's treachery in Dale that I recognised the name and made a fuller search of the vault, and found out what happened."

Munin takes a large metal-bound book out of a case and places it carefully on the table. The book is obviously old, but the dry air of vaults has preserved the parchment almost perfectly. The record-keeper handles the pages carefully.

"This book is one of a great many similar records detailing the building of the works and fortifications of the Kingdom under the Mountain. This particular volume describes a watchtower that our folk built in the Grey Mountains to the north. Its purpose was to keep a watch on the Withered Heath, and send a warning south would one of the great worms that lived there threaten to cross the mountains."

"No Dwarf living today knows if the watchtower was attacked by Smaug before he came to Erebor, or if the warning came too late. In any event, as far we can tell, the watchtower has been deserted for many decades."

Munin shows the company the book. Lockmand cut a page out of it. From its placement in the book, it was likely a map of the watchtower. King Dáin observes the reactions of the companions, then concludes:

"We do not know why this merchant seeks an abandoned watchtower. We don't even know if Lockmand's theft has anything to do with the recent attack on Dale. But I sent a raven north to look for and investigate the watchtower, and the bird has not returned. I worry that danger still hangs over Dale and the Mountain."

We Captured Lockmand!

If the company captured the merchant Lockmand during *The Crossings of Celduin*, then the players may ask why the merchant is not questioned to find out what he was doing in Erebor last year. Ori shakes his head and tells the company that Lockmand is dead. The merchant was locked in a jail cell in Dale, but was found dead a few days ago. His body was icy cold, and there was an expression of utter terror on his face. Whatever evil killed him, it passed by all the guards and watchmen in King Bard's hall without being seen.

The King under the Mountain needs counsel. What do the company say? Various topics are addressed below.

The War
The companions can speculate (correctly) that the recent attack on Dale may have been a diversion, to allow the enemy to slip past the Mountain and head for the northern wastes. The Orc army was too small to conquer Dale, and the enemy does not squander forces without purpose.

The Chain
If the company mention the Chain they saw on the Dwimmerhorn during *A Darkness in the Marshes*, then both Dáin and Munin stroke their beards thoughtfully. The connection between the Chain and the watchtower is a mystery to them, but the Chain is another significant factor that should be considered.

Where Exactly is the Watchtower?
The book that Lockmand perused and vandalised is unclear about the exact location of the watchtower. If Lockmand is still at large, this might lead the companions to the conclusion that if the watchtower is involved in the next stage of the merchant's plans he cannot have too much of a lead on them, as he is probably still searching the mountains.

- Scholarly companions can try to locate the watchtower by spending a fortnight studying with Munin in the Chamber of Mazarbul and making a **Lore** roll. On a success, they find additional details in a volume about the construction of Dwarven roads: the watchtower has been dug into the tip of a mountain peak called *Zirakinbar*; this isolated horn of rock rises about 80 miles north of Erebor, in the south-eastern arm of the Grey Mountains.

Conclusions
Dáin urges the company to travel north and search the watchtower for clues. For a more accurate assessment of how the company performed, compare the number of successful rolls the companions achieved during the episode with the entries given below.

1: Dáin is dismayed by the lack of initiative from the companions. The King doesn't comment, but he certainly hopes that their adventuring capabilities are better than their diplomatic skills!

2-4: The King under the Mountain offers the company 5 points of Treasure apiece for undertaking the quest. If there is at least one Dwarf in the company, the King allows them to take the book describing the watchtower with them, *but only if they expressly ask for permission*.

5-6: As 2-4 above; additionally, the King allows the company to take the book even if there isn't a Dwarf in the company.

7+: King Dáin is positively impressed. Apply the results of 2-4 and 5-6 above; additionally, the King directly proposes that the company carry the book with them.

If there are no Dwarves in the group, or if the companions do not ask to take the book and the King doesn't tell them to do so, then Munin promises to study the volume as much as he can before the group departs, but he fears that the dense tome will take too long for him to unlock all its secrets. See *Secrets of Mazarbul*, below.

The Last Night
Once the company have agreed to undertake the quest, Dáin tells them that they will depart at first light tomorrow. They will be provided with such supplies and travelling gear as the Dwarves can muster; Ori will see to their needs. The King departs, and leaves the company in Ori's care. Ori brings the company back up to the first level of the Mountain, and shows them to a dining hall where they are treated to the Dwarves' hospitality. The company are also equipped with travelling gear and other supplies.

Secrets of Mazarbul

Dwarven records can be written in the secret language of the Dwarves, but also in the Common speech, using dwarf-runes or various Elvish scripts. The book describing the watchtower is written in a dense, hard-to-read style that combines the Common Speech with Khuzdul terminology.

A character can try reading the book while travelling, at night by the light of a campfire. Doing so increases the difficulty of any Fatigue tests by two, but allows the character to make a Lore test each night. The difficulty for the roll is TN 16, or TN 14 if the reader is a Dwarf.

Each successful Lore test reveals one of the following secrets:

1. Secret Entrance: There is a concealed entrance into the cellars of the watchtower. The key to the door is "a polished axe, thrice".

2. Traps: The Great Hall is guarded by a mighty stone. Should enemies breach the gate, the stone can be lowered to block the entrance tunnel, protecting the watchtower from the mightiest foes.

3. Treasure Vault: A secret vault was built when the tower was carved out of the mountain. It is in the last bedchamber on the left, and the entrance is hidden in the floor.

4. Dangers of Dragons: Light no fire when in the Grey Mountains, and keep your gold out of the wind. Dragons can smell gold.

5. Chamber of Winds: The upper level of the watchtower is a great chamber where eight tunnels meet and eight windows look out over the world. Each of the tunnels has a separate door that can be opened or closed independently. When the wind blows, the tunnels become musical instruments and the mountain produces powerful sounds, originally used by the watchmen in the case of the direst emergencies. But the ingenious device can prove very dangerous: when the wind blows from the north, make sure not to open the north, south and north-east doors simultaneously, or the mountain's howl is so loud as to be dangerous!

6. Raven's Perch: For ordinary communications, at the very top of the watchtower is a small chamber where the Dwarves kept raven messengers. It looks down onto the Chamber of Winds. It is reached by a spiral staircase that opens off the main stairs.

If the companions do not take the book, then Munin's research reveals one of the secrets (roll a Success dice to decide which) before the company leaves Erebor.

- Part Two -
Across the Trackless Waste

The company leave the Mountain by the North Door, a postern gate only recently opened after some one hundred and fifty years buried under fallen stones. The view from the Mountain's northern flank is not as pleasant as the view from the Front Gate. Instead of the lights of Dale, the green valley, and the bright waters of the river running away into the south, the company look out upon miles of empty, trackless wasteland. Beyond the Waste they see a dark ridge of mountain peaks - the Grey Mountains.

"Good luck", says Ori, "I rather wish I was going with you. You might see a Dragon along your quest. You may not believe it, but during our adventure I never laid my eyes upon Smaug, and some people from Lake-town described his wrath as being terrible and beautiful at the same time. Is that not strange? Well, good luck and safe travels."

The Journey

The companions must journey across miles of broken land to reach the Grey Mountains. The Waste is a trackless wilderness, full of strange twisted shapes of stone and blind canyons. Little grows there except thorny bracken and weeds. No travellers go there and no folk dwell there.

- This journey to the Grey Mountains covers 80 miles across trackless, hard terrain. The journey takes eight days on average. Each companion must make two Fatigue tests (TN 18).

Once across, the company will have to find and ascend the peak of Zirakinbar.

Planning the Route

As usual, the companions are allowed a preliminary roll to plan their journey ahead.

Corruption Tests

The Waste is a Shadow Land, so a Corruption test is needed every day to avoid gaining a point of Corruption. The endless piles of stone and looming tors seem almost like gravestones, and as weariness takes hold, the companions seem to glimpse impossible shapes lurking in the stones or swirling in the fog.

From Erebor to the Grey Mountains

Unlike the Desolation of Smaug, the Waste is a land that is forever tainted. The Desolation is a fresh scar that may heal cleanly; this land is a rotten corpse, a gangrenous wound. Nothing seems to live here, amidst the tumbled hills and the reeking pools of water.

Searching for Signs

As the company travel, they can look for signs of the enemy. A successful **Hunting** or **Explore** roll lets the company make a grim discovery. They find the corpse of an Orc at the bottom of a gully. From his gear and weapons, the Orc seems to have been part of the same band that attacked Dale. Searching around nearby, the companions find some tracks in a soft patch of ground. Judging from the tracks, they have discovered the trail of a dozen or more Orcs, and some of the Orcs were carrying a very heavy burden.

- As the company examine the tracks, call for an **Awareness** test. Anyone who succeeds notices an eerie glow in the eyes of the Orc-corpse. The characters are being watched by the Gibbet King! If anyone reacts, the spirit departs, slithering out of the corpse and then vanishing into the north like a shadow.

Hazards Suggestions

Here are some suggestions for Hazard episodes specific to the Waste:

Moving Stones (Guide - Fatigue and Strain)

The huge piles of stone in the waste seem to *move* at night. The Guide must make a **Travel** roll (TN 16) to notice this. If the test fails, they add Fatigue again as they use one of the stone piles as a landmark, and end up leading the company around in a circle. Worse, the company are now surrounded by these stone piles, which seem to be drawing closer every day.

Another **Travel** test is required to thread a course between the piles. If this second test is failed, then the company is forced to climb over one of the stone piles. The pile is made up of thousands of jagged rocks and pebbles, and soon everyone in the company has banged a shin or cut a foot on a piece of sharp rock, losing a number of Endurance points equal to the roll of a Success

die. Weirdly, there is no blood on any of the stones – it is as though the stones drank the blood that was spilled on them!

The Dwarf-Road (Guide)
While exploring, the company's Scout finds one of the old Dwarf-roads that once crossed the Waste. This road does not head in the exact direction of the watchtower, but the characters could choose to take a longer but easier route by following the road for a while instead of going cross-country. If the Guide chooses to follow the road, the company proceed along the straight, flat road for a time. The road heads north-west. The easier route reduces the TN of the company's next Fatigue test by two levels (-4).

However, when it comes time to leave the road, something strange happens. The company feel an unnatural compulsion to keep following the road. Some force lurking under the mountains is trying to draw travellers on the road to itself, as if the road were a spider's web!

The company must make **Valour** tests (TN 14) to leave the road willingly. Those who fail are unable to voluntarily step off the road, and must be dragged off by their companions. If everyone fails, the whole company can try again a day later, but they have now added two days to their journey.

(Whatever dark force reached out for the companions is not part of this scenario. Brave companions can return to the road after completing their current quest, to investigate the matter further.)

Deep Pits (Scout - Wound)
There are steep shafts like dry wells scattered across the Waste, and an unwary companion might accidentally fall into one. There are loose stones and scree around the lip of each shaft, so putting a foot wrong may send the character tumbling down.

An **Explore** test is needed to avoid the shafts; if this test fails, the character falls twelve feet onto a stone floor, losing an amount of damage equal to the roll of a Success dice. If the roll was failed with a result of an , the Scout also takes a Wound.

A Scout who ends up at the bottom of a hole must either climb out (requiring another **Athletics** roll) or else wait for rescue.

Spoiled Food (Huntsman - Weariness)
There are maggots that live in the Waste that are not found anywhere else. The company discover that most of their food supplies are infested with these grubs and are inedible. There are few creatures that can be eaten in the Waste, unless you are lucky enough to find a wild goat or a scrawny crow. The Huntsman must make a **Hunting** test (TN 18) to bring in enough food for the company to eat; if this test fails, then all the companions are made temporarily Weary for the remainder of the journey.

Witherfinger

On the fifth day of travel into the Waste, the company come upon a stagnant pool of brown water. By the side of the pool is a figure. At first, it looks like a spindly, leafless tree covered in dead moss and ivy, but as they draw closer, they realise that it is an immensely old woman.

Her skin is brown and wrinkled, and her thin body is hunched over with a lifetime's work. Her eyes are old and sad and utterly mad. She stands with her feet immersed in the brown water, and sways gently back and forth, sometimes trailing her thin fingertips in the pool. She does not move while speaking with the company.

This strange creature calls herself Witherfinger. Whether she is human, Elf or something stranger, it is impossible to say. What is certain is that Witherfinger has a terrible fear of Orcs and fire, a legacy of some ancient tragedy, and so she dwells in the Waste where there is no one to threaten her. She roams the land endlessly with only her own thoughts and memories for company.

Playing Witherfinger

Witherfinger is a mystery in Middle-earth. She might be an incredibly old Entwife, or an incarnate spirit, or just a crazed old hermit. She is nervous and fearful, and is utterly terrified of Orcs and the shadow. She lives in the Waste to hide from these enemies, and worries that the presence of the company may draw the enemy to her. At the same time, she seldom has the opportunity to speak to anyone, and thus she cannot resist talking to them.

Only listen to half of what the company say. Pay more attention to the Hobbit's shiny buttons than the elf's tales of impending doom. If someone mentions Orcs, panic! Mutter to yourself. Stand with your legs straight together, and sway back and forth when talking.

Set Tolerance

Witherfinger is nervous, so the initial Tolerance is set equal to the highest Wisdom in the group. Increase the Tolerance by one if there is an Elf or Hobbit in the group; reduce it by one if there is a Dwarf.

- Keep track of how many successful rolls are scored by the companions. The final total is used to evaluate the amount of information the company gleans from Witherfinger (see *Interaction* below).

Introduction

Using **Awe** to threaten or impress the old woman alarms her; the company are better off using **Courtesy** to approach her. If addressed, she says:

> *"I am... well, I had a name once. It went away, like all the rest. Hmm. Call me Witherfinger. Come close, child, let me smell you and touch you."*

She beckons the company closer with her long black fingernails. Witherfinger wants to know what the company are doing here, who they are and, most importantly, she wants to make sure they are not Orcs. They could be Orcs, after all. They may *look* like Free Folk, but Orcs are tricky – maybe they are Orcs who peeled the faces off their victims and are now using them as masks! She wants the company to come close enough for her to touch them.

If everyone refuses, then Witherfinger assumes they are Orcs and panics – see *Witherfinger's Fear*, below.

If at least one companion submits, then Witherfinger runs her withered fingers over the companion's face. It is a disconcerting experience, to say the least – her fingers are covered with wispy hairs or tendrils or worms that wriggle and writhe, and force their way into the companion's ears, nose and mouth. Once satisfied that this companion at least is not an Orc, she agrees to talk to the company.

Interaction

For her part, Witherfinger wants to know who the company are and what they are doing. She knows little of the 'southlands', as she refers to everything south of the Lonely Mountain; Smaug's conquest of the Mountain counts as recent news to her, let alone the Dragon's death. If the company mention Orcs, she shivers and says:

> *"Orcs! You brought Orcs here! I saw them! Orcs are bad, bad, awful things. Don't bring Orcs here! No Orcs here, thank you!'*

The company must immediately calm her with **Inspire**, **Persuade** or some applicable Trait; otherwise, the encounter comes to an abrupt end as Witherfinger panics. If they calm her, they can question her about the Orcs she saw.

"They passed by here a few days ago. I hid. I'm very clever at hiding. I hid long ago, long ago, in a place where no one would ever find me. I saw them, and they did not see me. I... what was the question again, dearie? Oh yes, what I saw, I saw. Orcs! I saw Orcs, such Orcs as I have not seen in an age. They were going north towards the mountains. They were carrying a heavy chain. And I could smell dark magic upon it."

To convince Witherfinger to help them, the companions may use **Inspire** or **Awe** to show her they are ready for the challenges, or **Persuade** to beg for her help. Alternatively, they can address her fears by telling her that there is now peace and friendship between the Free Folk of the North, how the Bardings and Woodmen are allied with the Elves and Dwarves, how there is a King under the Mountain again and a King in Dale, and that the Orcs will be defeated by their new alliance.

If asked about the Chain, she knows little. She could tell it was evil, and powerful. If asked for directions, Witherfinger shudders again.

"The Orcs went north, yes, but that way leads into a dangerous land, where no one in their right mind should go! Huge Snow-Trolls prowl there, fighting and eating each other! Snow-Trolls are horrible, dangerous things, creatures made by the Enemy in the Elder Days! They'll eat each one of you in two bites, and come after me for dessert. No, it is much safer for you to stay here and hide with me."

At the end of the encounter, compare the number of successful rolls they achieved during the episode (including the Introduction) with the entries given below.

1: Witherfinger is easily scared, and by the end of the encounter she starts fearing she should have not spoken to these foreigners. A sudden gust of wind throws dust in the eyes of the companions, blinding them for an instant: when they recover, Witherfinger is nowhere to be seen.

2-4: Witherfinger fears for the safety of the companions. She teaches them how to avoid attracting the unwanted attention of the Snow-trolls. The creatures slumber during most of the day, but they can be awoken by the smell of prey. Each Troll sleeps in a different cave inside a deep valley. If you stay downwind of the caves' entrances, and avoid getting too close, you can creep past the Trolls without waking them. Tread softly!

5+: As above, but Witherfinger adds an additional warning; once the companions climb the Grey Mountains and look out over the Withered Heath, they should light no fire and carry no gold! Flame and treasure may both draw Dragons down upon unwary travellers. All that is bright is death in the Withered Heath.

Witherfinger bids the company farewell. If the company return to the brown pool later, there is no sign of her.

Witherfinger's Fear

If the company attack Witherfinger, or if they alarm her, then she calls up a windstorm that whips dust and small stones into the company's eyes. Everyone in the company loses a number of points of Endurance equal to the roll of a Success die and is blinded for a moment. When they can see again, Witherfinger is gone.

Worse, from that moment on, it is as though the whole of the Waste turns against the company. Stones work their way into boots, the weather switches from torrential rain to howling wind and back again, and every path seems to twist and double back on itself. The TN for any future Fatigue tests in the Waste is increased by two levels (+4).

- Part Three -
The Grey Mountains

Once the company have crossed the Waste, they have another day or so of slow travel across the foothills of the Grey Mountains. The terrain climbs steadily, as all the paths wind among the peaks and mountain tops.

- To find the peak of Zirakinbar and climb it the company must travel for 10 miles on broken paths and dangerous terrain. This leg of the journey takes three days, and requires a single Fatigue test at TN 20.

Corruption Tests

While travelling toward Zirakinbar, the companions can sometimes espy the Withered Heath through gaps in the mountains. The heath was once a green valley, but it was despoiled by the great worms long ago, and now it is a dead land. Its surface is scorched black, and the terrain itself has been rent for centuries by the claws of fighting Dragons. There are always great smoky clouds above the Heath, and the companions cannot shake the impression that there is something moving within the clouds. There is a smell of ash on the wind. This region ranks as a Dark Land, and the companions must succeed at a Corruption test twice per day at TN 14 or gain a point of Shadow.

Hazards Suggestions

Here are some suggestions for Hazard episodes specific to the Waste.

Getting Lost (Guide - Fatigue)
The Guide cannot find an easy way into the mountains, and the companions are forced to retrace their steps several times. The delay means they add Fatigue again, or twice if they rolled an .

Bad Weather (All Companions - Fatigue)
This far north, snow is a danger in any season. The company must all make **Travel** tests or add Fatigue again (twice if they fail with an).

Biting Cold (All Companions - Fatigue and Despair)
The temperature drops, all the company are tired and wet by the time darkness falls and they must make camp. Do they light a fire, or do they heed Witherfinger's warnings? If the company do not light a fire, then everyone must immediately make a Travel test to avoid adding Fatigue again (twice if they fail with an). If they do light a fire, there is no need for a test, but something huge and reeking of death flies low over the campsite in the middle of the night. All characters must make a Fear test (TN 14); those who fail lose 1 point of Hope, or 2 if they failed with the roll of an .

The Snow-trolls

On their way to the watchtower the company enters a deep, shadowy gorge, with high rock walls punctuated by openings. This gully is the lair of the Snow-trolls, and each opening is a cave that might contain one of them. Luckily for the company, there are no storms brewing, and the Snow-trolls are asleep in their caves (see the description of *Snow-trolls* below).

Scent of Prey

To navigate around the sleeping Snow-trolls, the company need to stay downwind of their caves and to tread lightly. Normally, that would be easy enough – but inside the gorge the direction of the wind is not easy to divine, and every sound echoes against the sheer surface of the gully walls.

- Crossing the gorge without waking a Troll requires four rounds of **Stealth** tests from each companion. Every round represents crossing in front of the mouth of a cave. If one hero fails a test, then the Troll inside the cave merely stirs and does not awaken. If two heroes fail in the same round– or one fails with an a Troll awakens.

The Snow-Troll Wakes

If the company are unlucky enough to wake a sleeping Snow-troll, then they are sent sprawling as the monster emerges from the cave charging and roaring, stones tumbling from the mouth cave like an avalanche. A Stone-troll is a ferocious beast, ten feet tall, entirely covered by shaggy white hair and with a head the size of a barrel.

When fighting the Troll, there are two added dangers:

- The path used by the company is narrow and steep: fighting companions count as *moderately hindered* when attacking (TN to hit +2; see Complications on page 181 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*).

- There are other sleeping Snow-trolls in the vicinity. If the company flee in the wrong direction, or if the fight disturbs a sleeping Troll, then they may awaken another one.

Snow-trolls

"He would go out by himself, clad in white, and stalk like a snow-troll into the camps of his enemies, and slay many men with his hands."

Snow-trolls are smaller than many of their brethren, but their ferocity makes up for the difference in size. They are usually found in caves, where they slumber waiting for a snowstorm to arrive. When the wind blows and snow reduces the visibility to mere inches, they go out to hunt in great numbers. Despite their size, Snow-trolls are silent hunters, capable of creeping upon their prey and catching them completely by surprise.

Snow-troll:

Attribute Level	
8	
Endurance	Hate
80	8
Parry	Armour
6	3d
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 2
Movement, 3	Custom, 0
Perception, 2	Vocation, 0
Weapon Skills	
Crush	3
Bite	4
Special Abilities	
Great Size	Seize Victim
Horrible Strength	Strike Fear

Weapons:

Weapon Type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Bite	5	10	16	-
Crush	Attribute Level		14	-
Notes				
The fangs of a Snow-Troll are big and sharp, like knives.				

- Part Four - Zirakinbar

Once past the gorge of the Snow-trolls, the company emerges in sight of the watchtower. There it stands, carved by the Dwarves out of the living rock, atop the peak of Zirakinbar. A narrow mountain road leads up to the main gate of the watchtower. As the company approaches, they see the many empty windows of the tower. Smoke issues from the upper levels. The watchtower is occupied, and there is a risk the company is being observed.

- The company must immediately make **Stealth** tests to take cover before the Orcs spot them. If successful, the company can sneak up on the watchtower. Otherwise, the enemy knows they are there.

As soon as the companions begin to move towards the tower they find their way blocked by the shade of a Man who beckons them to stop.

The Old Master

The shade is that of a middle-aged Northman, dressed in tatters. He stands motionless, but his clothes move as if touched by intangible winds. Barding adventurers and Dwarves from Erebor should recognise the apparition as the old Master of Lake-town, who many years ago fell prey to the Dragon-sickness and fled from Esgaroth with the city's share of the gold of Smaug, only to die in the Waste deserted by his accomplices.

His visage is a mask of sadness and distress - if the companions address him, the old Master speaks.

"They took my treasure, my share of gold thrice-cursed. They brought it all here, my coins, my cups, my strings of rings."

"Thrice-cursed, I call it. First, it made the Dwarves greedy and drew their doom upon their heads. Then, it consumed Smaug the Dreadful and made him weak. Finally, it made me blind to the joys of life, and turned me into an oath-breaker."

"Now my graven silver and carven gold will be offered to the plunderer, the slithering death. A precious lure to call him, an iron trap to chain him, and then unleash him upon the North. My betrayal is complete. I already feel his cold breath blowing from the North. Here he comes!"

With his last words, the shade raises an emaciated arm and points a finger towards the Withered Heath - there, a faint plume of dust can now be seen. Judging from the distance, whatever is causing the disturbance must be very large, and it is advancing at great speed. Then, the ghost of the old Master disappears.

What should the Companions Do?

The next two parts of the adventure aren't necessarily presented in chronological order. The first, *Part Five: The Scourge of the North*, details the great Cold-drake Raenar and how the company may deal with him. The following section, *Part Six: The Watchtower*, concerns what is inside the tower and the plans of the Gibbet King. Since the two parts are closely connected, the Loremaster should be familiar with the contents of both sections, and be prepared to inter-mingle them depending on the choices of his players.

- Part Five -
The Scourge of the North

When there was a Dragon under the Lonely Mountain, Gandalf the Grey feared that the Dark Lord could use Smaug the Dreadful as a weapon, and send him to burn the North in wrath. Bard the Bowman put that fear to rest, but there are still Dragons in the North...

A Forgotten Threat

Far off in the Withered Heath, a great Cold-drake slept. More than three hundred years ago he plagued the Grey Mountains, killing and stealing from the Dwarves who lived there. They called him *Raenar*, the plunderer, for he had smashed the gates of many halls since the reign of Náin the Second. In 2589 he killed King Dáin the First, together with Frór his second son, but was grievously hurt in the battle. Soon after that, he abandoned the region.

But Raenar didn't die of his wounds. He settled in a frozen cave to heal, and slowly fell into a slumber. His sleep would have lasted an age or more, if something didn't wake him up. His long sleep has diminished him in size and strength, but it hasn't robbed him of his wicked cunning or of his ability to catch the scent of gold and precious things...

A Precious Lure, an Iron Trap

Inside the watchtower, the Gibbet King has built a huge bonfire in the middle of the chamber at one of the topmost floors; he has also reopened the furnaces of the fortress,

and he is melting the gold of the Master of Esgaroth. The firelight and smoke has been pouring out of the eight windows of Zirakinbar for days now, to be carried by the winds towards the Withered Heath. It didn't take long for Raenar to catch the scent of molten gold, and he soon started to swiftly travel south...

With the Cold-drake unable to resist the scent of gold, the Gibbet King has started to tap into the baleful power of the Chain of Thangorodrim to enslave the monster to his will: by the time Raenar arrives at Zirakinbar, he will be fully under the spell of the Chain, ready to be attached to it and enslaved to the Gibbet King's will.

A Dangerous Conversation

If the company has figured out the plot of the Gibbet King, they might want to face Raenar, to warn him of the plans of the spirit. Hopefully, he won't like the prospect of slavery and will either return to his frozen lair, or even resolve to help the company to destroy the Gibbet King as a punishment for his attempted treachery. But it takes a lot of courage to face a living Dragon, and the companions will understandably be very uncertain about the prospect!

- A companion possessing the *Dragon-lore* trait (or *Shadow-lore*, possibly complemented by a **Lore** roll) could suggest this diplomatic option: after all, the famous Bilbo Baggins had a nice conversation with Smaug – at least before the Dragon tried to burn him! Naturally, the success of the task will depend on how the conversation is led, and who will be doing the talking: good sense should suggest they avoid sending forward a Dwarf or an Elf spokesman!

A Date with Death

To approach Raenar, the companions must head down the northward slopes of the mountains towards the Withered Heath. The Great Worm advances swiftly, and they see the dust cloud he raises in his march getting bigger and bigger, until they meet while still upon the foothills of the Grey Mountains. The Cold-drake's arrival is heralded by an almost overpowering stench.

Raenar is a terrifying sight, a vast silver-grey serpent, wingless, with a huge head set upon a thick neck. He advances walking on four short and robust legs, sometimes slithering on his slime-covered belly. From his beak-like muzzle and powerful, saw-toothed jaw emerge wisps of venomous cold vapours. Even reduced in size by centuries of slumber, Raenar is one of the greatest calamities that might befall the North, should his wrath be unleashed upon it.

If the companions do not hide from the Cold-drake, Raenar sees them from afar, and slows his advance, curious to discover what this is about. If they hide, he stops when close, and hails them: his keen sense of smell has revealed their presence from miles away...

Playing Raenar

Dragons are among the most powerful creatures to walk upon Middle-earth. This notion once made you impetuous and proud, even by the standards of Dragons. But the axe of Dáin I and the rune-scored sword of his son Frór have taught you that you are not invincible. Moreover, during your rest in the frozen north you have seen the fall of Smaug in your Dragon-dreams. You are not sure it really happened, but to exercise some caution in the presence of keen weapons will do no harm, especially until you'll be properly fed and grown to full size once again - and when that day comes, the Scourge of the North will be back! Finally, there is something you secretly hold precious above all else, even your life, and that is freedom. In distant ages you were born in thralldom, and long suffered the whip of your Master. That will never happen again, no matter the cost...

Set Tolerance

Raenar values little apart from murder, gold and precious stones, but he feels that something is not right, and he wants to discover what it is. The Tolerance rating for the encounter is equal to the lowest Valour or Wisdom rating in the group. He hates Dwarves and mistrusts Elves, so he will attack a company including one of the two races as soon as the group exceeds the Tolerance for the encounter. The presence of a Hobbit in the group raises the Tolerance by +1 (as Smaug, Raenar has never seen or heard of Hobbits before, and is mildly intrigued).

- The Loremaster can weigh the outcome of the encounter by keeping track of how many successful rolls are scored by the companions. The final total is used to evaluate what Raenar will do next (see *Interaction* below).

Introduction

Raenar is as vulnerable to flattery as any of his kin. Moreover, his latest deeds and his sleep have made him eager for a good duel of wits - the Dwarves he attacked before he retreated north weren't usually keen on making conversation!

- As a consequence, the company should each introduce themselves using **Courtesy** or **Riddle**. If the company chooses a Dwarf or an Elf as their spokesman, Raenar will try to kill the chosen representative right away, to then resume the conversation where it was interrupted.

On his part, Raenar humbly presents himself as the greatest of all Cold-drakes, the Dragon-king, the plunderer of a hundred Dwarf-halls, the slayer of Kings, the Great Worm of the Frozen Waste, the Scourge of the North, and so on.

Interaction

The companions now face the difficult prospect of convincing a Dragon not to kill them, and possibly to help them. Luckily for them, Raenar has only awoken recently and feels weak, and he has also known too many Dragons who died because they underestimated the strength of armed and armoured warriors...

There are a number of clues that the companions can pick up to pursue their cause.

Spellbound

A successful **Insight** test reveals that the Dragon is being dragged forward against his will. Raenar does not realise it though, so the companions need to roll **Persuade** to convince him that he is being summoned by sorcery.

Former Slave

Raenar wears an iron-banded collar around his powerful neck. Was he a slave before? The companions can roll **Inspire** to fire up his anger against the treasonous spirit who is trying to put shackles on him again.

Smaug is Dead

The company can tell Raenar that Smaug has been killed. They do not need to roll to convince Raenar this time - inside himself he knows it's true. What the companions have to decide is to what end they want to use the information.

Do they want to daunt Raenar, telling him that in Dale now sits a Dragonslayer? Roll **Awe** against TN 20. Or do they want to flatter him, telling that now he is the Chiefest and Greatest of Calamities? Roll **Courtesy**, or **Riddle**, against TN 18.

Conclusions

Unless the companions exceed the Tolerance of the encounter, Raenar comes to some agreement with them. For a more accurate assessment of how the company performed, compare the number of successful rolls the companions achieved during the episode with the entries given below.

1: The great Cold-drake has been convinced that something is suspicious about this treasure he smells in the air, but he can't be bothered with helping the company - he doesn't feel confident enough, and turns his tail and heads north, saying that one day he will return. The company has to deal with the Gibbet King on their own.

2-4: Raenar hears what the companions say, but he cannot believe someone will be able to subjugate him. He commands the companions to return to the watchtower, promising that he will take the Orcs and the spirit by surprise. He secretly intends to kill everyone once there, including the heroes, but he will fall under the Gibbet King's spell if the companions do not prevent it (see *The Chain of Thangorodrim*, at page 155).

5+: The Cold-drake sees the wisdom in the words of the companions. He accepts this strange alliance, but with his conditions: the companions will return to the watchtower alone, and he will come later to take the spirit by surprise. Once there, he will attack the spirit who intends to enslave him before it can work its sorcery upon him, and take the tower as his new lair and the treasure of the Master of Esgaroth as his hoard.

Raenar the great Cold-drake

"At last Dáin I, together with Frór his second son, was slain at the door of his hall by a great cold-drake."

Raenar is a monster bred in another age of the world. Once grown back to full stature, there will be no match for his strength in the North, now that Smaug is dead.

Cold-drake

Attribute Level	
10	
Endurance	Hate
120	12
Parry	Armour
12	6d/1d*
Skills	
Personality, 6	Survival, 3
Movement, 5	Custom, 5
Perception, 6	Vocation, 4
Weapon Skills	
Bite	5
Rend	3
Special Abilities	
Great Size	Thick Hide
Savage Assault	Foul Reek
Horrible Strength	Dreadful Spells**
Thing of Terror	*Weak Spot
Poison Blast	

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Bite	10	8	18	Pierce
Rend	7	9	20	-

Notes

Bite: *The Cold-drake mouth is a serrated beak, capable of crushing rocks.*

Rend: *When the Dragon has bitten a victim, he savages it with its fearful claws.*

***Dragon-spell:* during combat, reduce the Dragon's Hate point score by one to force one companion who is within his baleful gaze to make a Corruption check against TN 16. If failed, the companion gains 1 Shadow point and cannot attack the Dragon for a number of rounds equal to 10 minus his Wisdom rating. The Dragon can spend several Hate points to affect an equal number of companions at the same time. If used during an encounter, companions put under the Dragon-spell feel compelled to answer truthfully to questions for the duration of the encounter.

Poison Blast: By spending a point of Hate, the Dragon spits forth a jet of poisonous fumes. Anyone attacking the Dragon in close combat is caught in the blast and must immediately make a Protection test against TN 16. Those who fail are consumed and destroyed; a simple success means the character suffers 2 Success dice of Endurance damage, while a great success means the character only suffers 1 Success die of Endurance damage. An extraordinary success means the character comes through the fumes without harm.

Weak Spot: it is said that it is the doom of all Dragon-kind that regardless of how hard their armoured skin is to pierce, below they have the soft belly of a snake.

Whenever Raenar attempts a called shot or spends a point of Hate to use a special ability (*Horrible Strength, Poison Blast, Savage Assault* or *Dreadful Spells*) he exposes his weak spot for enough time for the companions to hit it with their next attack. When hit for a Piercing blow on his weak spot, Raenar rolls only one die for his Protection test. If the Dragon is wounded as the consequence of an attack on his weak spot, he breaks off the fight and flees.

- Part Six - The Watchtower

The watchtower is divided into four levels, carved into the living rock of Zirakinbar. When the company arrives, the Gibbet King is on the third level, bent on using the Chain of Thangorodrim to enslave the Dragon. His servants are mostly on the second level, ready to attack anyone who dares disturb their master.

- If the company head straight to the main door, then they walk into a fight (see *The Battle of the Great Hall* below). A better alternative is to enter the fortress by stealth, either by the hidden side door or by climbing up the side of the mountain.

Climbing the Mountain

Climbing the sides of Zirakinbar requires a roll of **Athletics**. Scaling the mountain face is a *very hard* climb (TN 20), but companions succeeding in an **Explore** roll or possessing the *Mountaineer* Trait can identify a better route and turn the attempt into a prolonged action requiring three **Athletics** rolls at TN 14.

Falling

Failing an **Athletics** roll while climbing means the companion slips and falls. If this happens, roll the Feat die and read the result below.

- : The companion falls from the mountain face from a high point and plummets to his death! Unless the adventurer was climbing alone, another companion may attempt to catch him with another **Athletics** test.
- **1-10:** The companion slips and slides and loses a number of Endurance points equal to double the die result.
- ᚠ: Fortune smiles on the adventurer, and he catches himself before he falls into the void.

Exploring the Watchtower

If the companions enter the watchtower stealthily they can explore it. Moving silently inside the fortress requires **Stealth** tests, with the TN varying from 12 to 18 depending on the circumstances.

The Watchtower

1. The Road: This road zig-zags up the mountain to the main gate. Parts of the road are badly damaged, but the mountain keep itself is untouched.

2. Main Gate: Two great doors of stone stand proud, engraved with runes of defiance and watchfulness. The doors swing open when touched if they are unlocked, but could not be pushed open by a Dragon if locked. The doors are unlocked, and one is ajar.

3. Secret Entrance: This is a side portal, disguised using dwarven artistry so it looks just like a rock face. The outline of the door can only be seen in a mirror or some other reflection. To open the door, a Dwarf must knock three times with a hammer or axe-head. The secret entrance opens into a narrow tunnel that leads to the cellars.

4. Guardrooms: Orcs lurk in these rooms. Each guardroom contains from 2 to 7 Orcs. If the company's presence is known, then the Orcs are alert and patrolling nearby rooms, or getting ready to attack. If the company have managed to approach the watchtower without being spotted, however, then the Orcs are mostly lazing around, sleeping or grumbling about being dragged here to the end of the world by 'Bloodybones'.

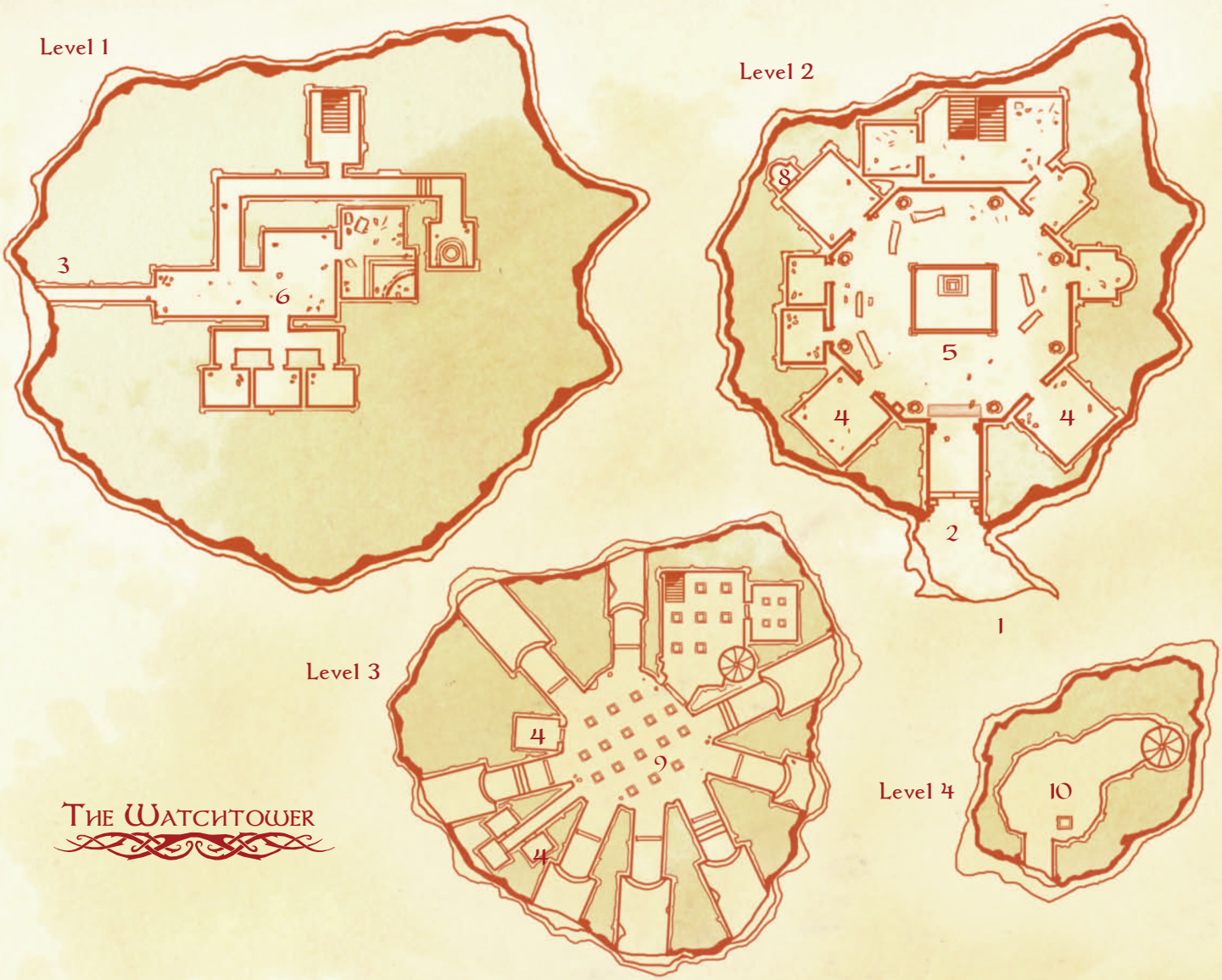
5. Great Hall: This hall was made using cunning stonework. The ceiling arches so high up that the roof is lost in shadow. Hidden vents in the floor and walls connect to furnaces in the cellars, so that the hall was

once warm and welcoming even when the blizzards howled on the mountain outside. Most of the furnaces are dark and dead now, and the hall is icy cold. There is a massive central platform where the Dwarves met in council, a stone throne upon it. Around the edge of the hall are benches, nooks for study and craft, and a kitchen.

Directly over the entrance is a huge block of stone suspended by chains. The Dwarves put this in place to block the entrance should the main gates ever be breached. A huge wheel next to the entrance corridor controls the raising and lowering of the block. If the wheel is allowed to spin freely, the block falls and crushes anyone or anything beneath it. Using the rusted mechanism requires a **Craft** test. The company can use this trap in their fight if they spot it, or learned of its existence by consulting the dwarven records.

The Gibbet King ordered his defenders to make their stand here. A huge Troll lurks in the shadows. There are Goblin Archers crawling in the darkness overhead. Meanwhile, the Orcs in the two adjoining guardrooms are ready to rush out and join the fray once battle begins. See *The Battle of the Great Hall*.

6. Cellars: The old cellars are lightless and abandoned. Most of these rooms were old store-rooms; others were



The Watchtower

furnaces used to heat the halls above. Two of these have been opened and are being used to melt the gold of the Master of Esgaroth. Two trusted servants of the Gibbet King have been set to the task: a Messenger of Lugbúrz and a lowly Snaga Tracker.

7. Empty Chambers: (Unmarked on map) These rooms were once inhabited by Dwarves, but no longer. Most are entirely empty; others contain the shattered remains of furniture and other debris. They have long since been picked bare of any treasure or useful items.

8. Secret Vault: The entrance to this vault is cleverly concealed. It can be found only by rolling an extraordinary success on a **Search** test, unless the searcher is a Dwarf, in which case only a simple success is needed. The TN drops to 10 if the company know of the existence of the vault.

- The vault contains the part of the treasure of the Master of Esgaroth that is not being burned in the furnaces: gemstones, necklaces, carved idols, worth 200*** points of Treasure all told. Getting this hoard across the wastes and back to Erebor may prove tricky.

9. Chamber of Winds: This chamber is the heart of the watchtower. Eight portals look out on the mountains from this vantage point. From here, a watcher can look north into the Withered Heat. Looking south, the observer can see the sunlight gleaming off the snowy peak of the Lonely Mountain on the horizon. East and west, the mountain chain stretches off into the distance.

There is a door half-way along each tunnel, so the eyes of the watchtower can be closed in a particular direction to shelter observers from the wind. The Dwarves wrought these doors and tunnels in such a way that they can be left partially open.

When the wind blows in the right way, and the correct combination of doors are open or half-open, then the whole chamber resonates with the howling of the wind, becoming a mighty musical instrument. The peak of Zirakinbar *sings*.

10. Raven's Perch: The raven's perch is a small room at the very top of the watchtower. Once, a colony of ravens of the mountain lived here, and carried messages between the outpost and Erebor. They are gone now. There is a trapdoor in the floor of the perch that looks down on the Chamber of Winds below.

The Bowl of the Mountain

The Chamber of Winds holds a deadly secret – the Dwarves calculated long ago that the right combination of winds could cause the whole watchtower to resonate, creating a thunderous dirge so loud that it would crush the skull of anyone in the chamber. Left for long enough, it could even cause the very walls to crack and break. Creating the Bowl of the Mountain requires the wind to blow from the North, and for the companions to close all the doors except the south, north and north-east doors.

If this is done, then the Bowl begins to build. It takes six rounds of combat for the noise to reach a dangerous intensity. After this, anyone in the Chamber of Winds loses a Success die worth of Endurance points each round. Any character who suffers more than 10 points of Endurance damage in this fashion is permanently deafened.

The North Wind

If the companions are set to create the Bowl of the Mountain, possibly to harm the Orcs or the Gibbet King - or even Raenar the Dragon! – roll the Feat die. If it produces a result from 1 to 5, the wind will start blowing within the hour; if the result is 6 to 10, the wind won't blow before at least three hours pass. On a ᚠ rune, the wind is already blowing when the companions are finished arranging the doors. On a 👁 result, the north wind won't blow for the day and the roll will have to be repeated the following day.

The Battle of the Great Hall

If the company dare defy the defences of the enemy, they will find that their forces in this chamber are considerable. The main danger is the Cave-troll lurking on the far side of the room, but there are also four Goblin Archers in the ceiling, and twice as many Orc Soldiers as there are members of the company in the guardrooms.

Entering the Hall

When the company enter the hall, call for **Awareness** tests. If successful, the company spot the Cave-troll lurking in the darkness. Otherwise, the company only realise they are not alone when the Troll attacks.

The Battle Begins

The Troll begins the fight by leaping onto the middle platform, grabbing the throne, and throwing it at the company. All companions must make an **Athletics** or **Awareness** test to dodge the throne; those who fail take two Success dice worth of Endurance damage and must make a Protection test (TN 16) to avoid being Wounded. Those who fail are also stunned for one round and cannot act.

At the same time, the Goblins on the ceiling start loosing arrows at the company, while Orcs pour out of the side rooms. The Orcs try to surround the company, blocking their retreat down the tunnel to the main doors.

Escape but No Retreat

While the company cannot use the Escape Combat action to flee out the main gate if the tunnel is blocked by Orcs (or by the stone block), there are other ways out of the chamber. A character could flee up or down the stairs, or jump into one of the heating vents and tumble down to the old furnace in the cellars below.

Dropping the Stone Block

To use the stone block trap, the company must:

- **Know about the trap:** If the company read the Dwarven records at Erebor, they may know about this trap. Otherwise, any character looking around the hall will notice the block of stone hanging from the ceiling, and the control wheel can easily be found by a character who goes looking for it.

- **Lure their enemies under the block:** This can be done as part of a normal attack. Any character in Open or Defensive Stance can manoeuvre a foe with a successful **Battle** test, using precisely placed blows and footwork to dance around the enemy and push him into the danger zone.

- **Drop the block:** A **Craft** roll is needed to unlock the wheel. Alternatively, a character can cut the chain by making a weapon attack and spending a point of Hope.

- **Get out of the way:** Any companions under the block must make **Athletics** or **Awareness** tests to dodge out of the way. Anyone under the block is crushed to death when it falls.

Entering the Chamber of Winds

The first thing the companions see if they enter the Chamber of Winds is the blazing bonfire. Next to the bonfire, in a cage, stands another mummified corpse like the ones they saw at Dwimmerhorn and at the Crossings of Celduin – another mouthpiece for the Gibbet King.

The Gibbet King is accompanied by nine Black Uruks of Mordor, his bodyguards of choice; the burliest two of them carry the heavy weight of the Chain of Thangorodrim.

The Last Debate

Once the company enter the Chamber of Winds and the spirit detects them, he mocks them and bids them to lay down their weapons.

> *"This is the hour of my triumph. In ages past, the Dragons were weapons of terror, wrought by the Lord of Middle-earth to enslave all the Mortal races. Now, this weapon will once again be in the right hands. No sword nor shield can withstand the fury of the Great Worm! Lay down your weapons and I shall grant you a quick death. Refuse, and your souls will be my playthings until the ending of the world!"*

Assuming the company do not surrender, then battle is joined. The Gibbet King orders the Black Uruks to engage the company. The two Uruks holding the Chain wait in reserve, and only join the fight if the company are clearly winning the battle.

Battling the Orcs

The Orcs try to drive the companions away from the Gibbet King, ideally by forcing them down one of the side tunnels towards another window.

Sorcery

The Gibbet King does not attack physically, but every round he targets a companion, either with *Dreadful Spells* or *Bewilder*, to open them to the attack of his Black Uruk bodyguards. He uses his paralysing spell on the most dangerous companions, usually targeting those in Forward stance. He can only cast spells before the Dragon arrives – if Raenar is present, the Gibbet King must bend his will towards controlling the drake, and cannot continue to weave his sorcery against the company.

Reinforcements

More Orcs may arrive from the lower levels of the watchtower during the fight, especially if the company avoided the battle in the great hall below.

The Chain of Thangorodrim

If the company didn't warn Raenar of the plans of the Gibbet King, the Dragon arrives on Zirakinbar not expecting a trap. If this happens, the spirit successfully bewilders the Great Worm long enough for the remaining Orcs to carry the Chain forward and place it around Raenar's neck. To keep the Dragon quiescent, the Gibbet King must turn all his power towards the Dragon, and thus cannot target the companions.

- The company must stop the Orcs from placing the Chain on the Dragon. If they fail to do so, then the Gibbet King gains complete control over Raenar. The Gibbet King's first command is to order the Cold-drake to destroy the companions. With no way to stop the Gibbet King or to defeat the Dragon, the company are likely doomed.

If the company slay the Orcs, then they have a chance to defeat the Gibbet King once and for all before more Orcs arrive from the lower halls.

Raenar

When he arrives, the Dragon creeps upon the mountain outpost. The company catch a whiff of his foul stench carried by the wind. Suddenly, they hear a roar that is louder than thunder, louder than an earthquake. Raenar climbs the north face and scrabbles at the windows, his claws ripping chunks of stone asunder as a man might tear paper. What the Cold-drake will try to do depends on whether the company encountered him or not.

The Power of a Dragon

The spirit that animates Raenar can be considered to be at least as powerful as the Gibbet King. If the Great Worm were to breathe poison upon the Gibbet King, it would not only dissolve the bones and melt the cage bars, but could also send the spirit into oblivion, consuming away so much of the King's spiritual essence as to reduce it to a bodiless, wordless spirit of hate. The Dragon attempts to annihilate the Gibbet King only if the companions were able to inflame the Dragon's fear of being enslaved once again.

Defeating the Gibbet King

As the Gibbet King is an incorporeal spirit, the company cannot attack him directly. Barring the unexpected help of Raenar (see the *The Power of a Dragon* sidebar), there are two main ways that the company can defeat him.

Ruining His Plans

Stopping the Gibbet King from enslaving the great Cold-drake is enough to temporarily defeat the spirit. The Dwimmerhorn is empty, his Orc-host was destroyed by the army of Dale, and now the Chain of Thangorodrim has proven useless. The Gibbet King may still be abroad in the world, but his power base is depleted. The spirit may return to trouble the Free Peoples once again in the future, but the company have ruined his plans, and it will take him many years to rebuild.

Using the Chain of Thangorodrim

The Chain of Thangorodrim enslaves the will of whoever wears it, making them subservient to the Gibbet King. If the companions place the Chain upon the Gibbet King, they create an endless loop. The spirit will be trapped within the confines of the Chain, beyond all darkness, unable to give itself commands, endlessly waiting for orders from its own dead lips.

– Epilogue –
A Renewed Spring of Joy

With the Gibbet King defeated, the company can start on the long journey back to Erebor. If they didn't defeat Raenar too, the Cold-drake takes the watchtower as his lair, and the Dragon may prove to be a threat to the Lonely Mountain in years to come. For the moment, the shadow has been driven back once more, and the company have won a few years of peace through their brave deeds.

- King Dáin is generous once he hears of the company's deeds, and rewards them each with 20 points worth of Treasure, in place of the 5 he promised. A feast is held in the company's honour in Dale, and their names are spoken of with respect throughout Wilderland.

Fellowship Phase

The year after the defeat of the Gibbet King is a prosperous one. The company may open Dale or Erebor as a sanctuary, and can easily win the patronage of Dáin or Bard should they wish. Any companions who wish to settle in Dale will be given land by King Bard, who knows the value of having trusty allies nearby.

The One Ring
-Wilderland-
Mount Gundabad
Grey Mountains
Withered Heath
Zirakinbar
Mount Gram
ELVES of MIRKWOOD
DWARVES of the LONELY MOUNTAIN
The Waste
Elven King's Halls
Erebor
Dale
Esgaroth
Long Lake
BARDINGS
Iron Hills
Ettenmoors
Forest River
Forest Gate
Elf-path
Long Marshes
Coldfells
Easterly Inn
Eagles Eyrie
Carrock
Beorn's House
Goblin Town
BEORNINGS
Mountains of Mirkwood
River Hoarwell
Trollshaws
High Pass
Old Ford
Old Forest Road
Rivendell
to THE SHIRE
Redwater
Stonyford
Woodland Hall
Crossings of Celduin
Mountain Hall
Bandit Camp
WOODMEN
Running River
River Loudwater
Mountain Pass
Woodmen Town
River Gladden
Gladden Fields
Dwimmerhorn
Rhosgobel
East Bight
The Narrows of the Forest
to Dorwinion
Redhorn Pass
Moria
Dimrill Dale
Great River of Wilderland
Dol Guldur
Lórien
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